



**November 10, 2013**

**Thirty-second Sunday Ordinary Time**

*"...God is not God of the dead, but of the living, for to God all are alive." Luke 20:38*

Dear Friends;

When I was young my uncle Jerry was pastor of Holy Name of Jesus parish. One of the things that I remember about that church was on the main aisle. In the terrazzo floor was depicted a large butterfly. I remember asking my uncle about it. He explained that it was an ancient symbol for the resurrection. The butterfly starts as a caterpillar. Eventually the caterpillar goes into its cocoon. The caterpillar emerges from the cocoon transformed into a butterfly. Christians saw this as a symbol of resurrection. In the resurrection, Jesus was transformed into a new kind of life. So too will we.

Our ancestors in faith did not originally believe in the resurrection. There was no idea of a "soul" that lives forever. That was not a Jewish but a Greek idea. For the ancient Israelites a human is made up of "flesh" and "breath" (also called "spirit") Flesh and breath form one human person. When they were separated the person was dead. The flesh also died. And if there was anything left of the spirit it existed in a shadowy place called *Sheol*. But that was not a place anyone wanted to go.

This was a very primal understanding of life. Everything was rooted in the present reality. The Kingdom of God was the land God gave them—Israel. If you were good in this life you were blessed with children, long life and productive land. If you did evil, then you would not be blessed with these things. The 'After Life' was you lived on in your children. It was simple, obey the law and live a long happy life.

But things did not always work out that way. We see in the first reading from the Second Book of Maccabees the story of a mother and her seven sons. They are all being tortured and killed for following the law of God. They are obeying God yet suffering for it. It is from this experience that a new idea emerges—resurrection.

Resurrection is the idea that God will give life again to those who suffered unjustly for obeying God. This idea is rooted in faith. God is ultimately just and he is faithful to his faithful people. So God will restore the lives of those who place their hope in him. They will be raised up "flesh" and "breath." We are not immortal but God is. And because God is just, God will raise up the faithful. He will breathe his divine Spirit (breath) into them.

By the time we get to Jesus many of the Jewish people believe in resurrection. The traditionalists (Sadducees) do not. They cling to an earlier understanding of life. And they will not accept any new developments in the faith (the prophets and oral tradition) only the five books of Moses. This is why they challenge Jesus, who like the Pharisees, believes in resurrection.

The Sadducees challenge Jesus' belief by posing a case about a woman who was married to seven brothers. They think that by resurrection means merely to be resuscitated to life as we know it. But Jesus clarifies that resurrection is to a life qualitatively different from this life, "They can no longer die, for they are like angels."

Jesus' resurrection is the beginning and pattern of our own. Jesus who was so unjustly treated was raised up by God body and spirit. He emerged from the tomb like a butterfly from a cocoon. We are the risen body of Christ and now his Spirit dwells in us. And in faith we await our own personal transformation because God is God of the living.

This month of November, we remember that all our loved ones now live in God. And one day we shall joyfully greet them again. God is a God of life and love. God is faithful to his love for us. We will rise again!

Peace,

*Fr. Ron*