

Thirty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time



Religious quarreling and technical disputes make little sense to the individual or family desperate to find freedom from the addictions, attachments, and compulsions which keep them in darkness. In the gospels, Jesus often wrestles with the Pharisees. It is important to note that Jesus was socially and religiously close to them, which brought a great deal of pain when conflict got in the way of their mission.

The Pharisees were middle-class, devout Jews who tried very hard—perhaps too hard, in Jesus' estimation—to work a spiritual program. Jesus shared a message with them similar to that of recovery—that the work we are to do must be done alongside God's grace. This week, a different group goes head-to-head with Jesus. The Sadducees were upper-class members who were high-priests and wealthy merchants. Jesus only encountered them when He finally reached Jerusalem, the center of their power. They were disinterested in spending time with the meek and mourning.

The Sadducees did not believe in individual resurrection from the dead since they were already rich with the things of this world. Being *reasonably happy in this life and supremely happy with Him forever in the next* had no appeal to the aristocrats who believed they had it all. Acting as gods in their own lives, they could not imagine things getting any better than what they already had. Therefore, they fought to protect the status quo while caring little for those who were without.

Jesus was teaching people in the temple area and proclaiming the good news when a group of Sadducees approached him to catch him in a bind. They asked a question about marriage laws after the resurrection. Jesus responds to their naive understanding by making the point that the resurrection is not about people being a certain way or possessing certain things.

Instead, Jesus claims that we are "children of the resurrection" because we are in a relationship with a Higher Power, the essence of whom is life. We can *turn our will and lives over to the care of God* (Step 3) with confidence that He is faithful. This Sunday's Second Reading affirms this:

*But the Lord is faithful;
He will strengthen you and guard you from the evil one.
We are confident of you in the Lord that what we instruct you,
you are doing and will continue to do.
May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God
and to the endurance of Christ.*

Reflection Questions

The position of the Sadducees and the reductive assumptions they made about Jesus are not much different than some cultural attitudes of today. Fortunately, we get the gift of witnessing God do miraculous things in our lives and the lives of others in recovery fellowships. We have extended our arms for help, and the hand of our loving God shows us the way. Over time, we witness God doing for us and our families what we could not do for ourselves.

Our reliance on each other and the connection we share as children of God is an essential element of recovery and our faith as Catholics. High-minded discussions and debates about faith serve a purpose, but if they interfere with anyone's path toward God, they could be reconsidered. Those who have years or decades of freedom from their addiction, compulsion, or attachment continue to return to recovery fellowships because it is one of the surest ways to find God and remain free, one day at a time.

As a result of working through the Twelve Steps and being part of a Christian community, we get to reclaim our integrity and get back some of what addiction has taken from us. However, the greatest thing we can gain in the process is a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and an unrelenting reliance upon Him, as if we are always needing His grace.

- How do you interpret being reasonably happy in this life and supremely happy with Him forever in the next?
- How do you witness the presence of God throughout your day?
- Share what's going on in your life today and tie it to a spiritual solution or action.

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Sunday Mass Readings this Week

First Reading: 2 Maccabees 7:1-2, 9-14

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 17:1, 5-6, 8, 15

Second Reading: 2 Thessalonians 2:16-3:5

Gospel: Luke 20:27-38