

2. June 2021

“The Resurrection”

Mk 12:18-27

Then some Sadducees - who deny that there is a resurrection - came to him and they put this question to him, 'Master, Moses prescribed for us that if a man's brother dies leaving a wife but no child, the man must marry the widow to raise up children for his brother. Now there were seven brothers; the first married a wife and then died leaving no children. The second married the widow, and he too died leaving no children; with the third it was the same, and none of the seven left any children. Last of all the woman herself died. Now at the resurrection, when they rise again, whose wife will she be, since she had been married to all seven?' Jesus said to them, 'Surely the reason why you are wrong is that you understand neither the scriptures nor the power of God. For when they rise from the dead, men and women do not marry; no, they are like the angels in heaven. Now about the dead rising again, have you never read in the Book of Moses, in the passage about the bush, how God spoke to him and said: I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob? He is God, not of the dead, but of the living. You are very much mistaken.'

A good marriage, in which the spouses love each other dearly and whose love endures, grows and matures, represents the greatest happiness and joy on earthly level. Furthermore, marriage reflects the relationship between God and the human soul. St. Paul also speaks of this sacrament as a sign of the mystery between Christ and the Church (*cf. Eph 5:21-33*).

But today's Gospel gives us to understand that this great relationship of love - the supreme on the earthly level - does not continue in the same way in eternity. In eternal life, we will be like the angels, who have a spiritual relationship with each other and with God.

So, one might ask: What will become of my husband or wife in eternity? Will our relationship end in the eternal life?

Although we have no dogmatic teaching on this, we can assume that, although the relationship will be different, it will be even deeper. For if man and woman were worthy to share in the resurrection and to live for eternity with God, then they also have a share in heavenly perfection; and, enjoying the beatific vision, they will be able to meet each other as creatures living forever in the light of God. This new situation

can in no way be inferior to the love relationship they had in this life, however beautiful it may have been, for God Himself will perfect their love in Himself.

While this gospel passage invites us to reflect on marriage, this is not the primary theme. The Sadducees were a current within Judaism at that time, which denied the resurrection of the dead. They were therefore in constant dispute with the Pharisees, who did believe in the resurrection. So, the Sadducees wanted to know what Jesus thought about it, and they put forward a hypothetical example, in order to tip the balance in their favour regarding the resurrection of the dead.

With His answer, the Lord gives us certainty on this question, before giving the final proof with His own Resurrection from the dead.

Yes, the resurrection of the dead is attested by Holy Scripture and is a firm and essential part of our profession of Christian faith. Unfortunately, however, it so happens that in our time there are theologians who no longer believe in the bodily resurrection of the dead. Since such theologians have spread their error, we often find it quite widespread among the Christian people.

Perhaps it is still believed that, in one way or another, things continue after death, or that only the soul lives on, or other diffuse ideas. But all this does not correspond to the Christian faith as proclaimed by the Church, which holds the certainty that we men will also rise bodily at the End of Time, and that we will receive a glorious body, which will no longer be subject to death. Although it is the same body that was given to us for our earthly life, after the resurrection it will be as transfigured (*cf. 1 Cor 15:42-44*).

Let us remember that Jesus appeared to the disciples after his resurrection, showing them His wounds (*cf. Jn 20:19-20*), which were now in a transfigured state.

Indeed, faith in the Resurrection of Christ is fundamental: *“How can some of you be saying that there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ cannot have been raised either, and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is without substance, and so is your faith. In fact, however, Christ has been raised from the dead, as the first-fruits of all who have fallen asleep.” (1 Cor 15:12b-14.20).*

All these theological errors and confusions must be opposed with a firm faith. This is based on Holy Scripture and the Magisterium of the Catholic Church. The certainty of the Resurrection is not obtained from our own experience, but is a revelation that we believe in by the grace of God. The message of the Resurrection gives us the great hope that we will be united with God for all eternity, and that our life in Christ, now

still hidden, will be gloriously revealed (*cf. Col 3:3-4*). Faith in the resurrection can give us the strength to endure great sufferings that may befall us on our path of following the Lord.

In the Old Testament we find a wonderful testimony to faith in the resurrection. One of the seven brothers who were martyred for holding fast to the law of God, said to the king before he died, *“Cruel brute, you may discharge us from this present life, but the King of the world will raise us up, since we die for his laws, to live again for ever.”* (2 Mac 7:9). Another of them, the fourth of the seven brothers, spoke these words: *“Ours is the better choice, to meet death at men's hands, yet relying on God's promise that we shall be raised up by him; whereas for you there can be no resurrection to new life.”* (2 Mac 7:14)

In the face of the current tendency to relativise or reinterpret the Resurrection of Christ, today too we would have to reply along with Jesus, saying, *“You are very much mistaken.”*