

Ordinary Time 32C 2016

Resurrection

Every week when we recite the creed, we say: “I look forward to the resurrection of the dead.” In the Eucharistic Prayer we pray: “Remember also our brothers and sisters who have fallen asleep in the hope of the resurrection. We do this because the resurrection is at the heart and center of all that we believe. If God did not raise Jesus from the dead, St. Paul says, our faith is in vain, and we are still in our sins. If God did not raise Jesus from the dead, we have no hope for eternal life. It is the resurrection of Jesus and our hope for resurrection life that defines us as Christians.

But in the gospel we just heard, some people try to show Jesus how absurd it is to believe in the resurrection of the dead. Suppose, they say, seven brothers married the same woman. After they die whose wife will she be when they are raised from the dead? But Jesus is not deterred by their argument because they do not understand either the power of God or what it means to rise from the dead. They think of resurrection is a merely human way: as the dead returning to life. And so Jesus reminds them, and us, that resurrection life is something entirely different that we cannot understand until we experience it. They have misunderstood the power of God to change to bring life out of death.

The seven brothers, whose story we heard in today's first reading, understood this. Each of them was being brutally put to death, one after the other, in the presence of their mother, because they refused to renounce their ancestral faith. In the face of death, they believed in the power of God to raise them from the dead. And because they believed in the power of God to give them new life, they chose to die rather than to deny their faith.

As I listen to their story, I wonder how I would have reacted. I wonder if I would have had their courage to surrender my life in hope of the resurrection. I wonder if, in the face of pain and suffering, I might not have found it more convenient to deny my faith. These seven brothers looked beyond their suffering because of their profound faith in the power of God. Although their enemies could destroy their bodies, they believed in the power of God to give them life—resurrection life.

For many people this life is the only life. After death, there is no life; there is only the grave. It is not difficult to understand this point of view. After all, death is that last enemy, that powerful enemy we cannot overcome by our own power. But with God, all things are possible—even the resurrection of the dead. God and only God can bring forth life from death. When we believe this, our lives are changed and renewed. When we believe this, we experience the power of Christ's

resurrection even now. In believing this we proclaim that not even death can separate us from the love that God has for us in Jesus Christ.