

Ordinary 32C 2013
The Resurrection of the Dead
Father Frank Matera

The month of November is a time when we remember the faithful departed, those who have died in Christ. During this month, when the darkness of winter overcomes the light of summer, we remember those who have gone before us in Christ. In doing so, we respect their memory. But more importantly, we profess our faith that those who have died in Christ will rise with Christ, those who have lived with Christ will reign with Christ. In a word, we profess our faith in the resurrection of the dead. In doing so, we proclaim that God, not death, will have the last word, the final word, the most important word, the only word that counts. We proclaim that life in Christ is more powerful than death.

The story we heard in today's first reading from the Book of Maccabees provides us with a powerful example of faith in the resurrection of the dead. Seven brothers are cruelly put to death because they prefer to die rather than to transgress God's law. As the last brother is about to die he boldly proclaims, "It is my choice to die at the hands of men with the hope God gives of being raised by him, but for you there will be no resurrection to life." Confident that his death will not be the end of his life, he professes his faith in the God who raises the dead.

In today's Gospel, Jesus also proclaims the power of God to raise the dead. The Sadducees, a group of priests who do not believe in the resurrection of the dead, present Jesus with a complicated case intended to prove there is no resurrection of the dead. If there is a resurrection of the dead, they argue, whose wife will this woman be who married seven brothers be?

But Jesus understands what they do not understand. In the new age, at the resurrection, people will no longer marry or be given in marriage. Those who are raised from the dead will be forever changed and transformed; they will be like the angels of God. Jesus understands that God is more powerful than death. Jesus understands that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is the God of the living. Jesus understands that all are alive in God's presence.

Our faith in the resurrection of the dead is rooted in a simple fact: the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Because God has raised Jesus from the dead, we believe that God will raise us from the dead. Because Jesus lives forever in God's presence, we believe that our life will not end with death but be changed and transformed after the pattern of Christ's resurrection life. Because God saved Jesus from the power of death, we believe that God can and will rescue those who live in Christ from the dead as well.

Consider what happens each time we celebrate this Eucharist. When we eat this bread and drink from this cup, we participate in the life of the risen Lord Jesus Christ. When we eat the bread of life and drink from this cup of salvation, we enter into body of

the risen Lord. And when we eat this bread and drink from this cup, we are united with all the saints, living and departed who are in Christ. In Christ, we are one with all who have gone before us in Christ.

As we celebrate this Eucharist we pray for the faithful departed and we profess our faith in the resurrection of the dead.