

32nd Sunday C 9th & 10th Nov. 2013

Dear Brothers and sisters,

I want to continue where I left from last week on death, resurrection and Purgatory. Last week, I gave you the reason to believe in purgatory. We all know that we will not live forever. Death is inevitable however healthy you may be, how best our health care may be. During this time, we are also concerned with the health care coverage and what changes it would bring to your insurance cover. Here is my take on this, in spite of the best care we may have, It will not make us live forever. All of us have to come to the realization that death is inevitable.

SO this week, my point is that I want to reassure you about what we talked about last week. At one point while talking about the scriptural background to pray for the dead, I referred to 2nd Book of Maccabees. This is exactly the passage I was talking about. Seven brothers and mother were arrested for violating the Jewish law. The Jewish law prohibits them to eat pork. The pagan King orders these even brothers and the mother eat the forbidden food. All seven brothers die as martyrs. The mother prays for the dead seven sons so that they gain eternal kingdom.

The second point we learn from this passage is, about resurrection. The first brother realizing that he will be killed at any moment he said these words, **"You accursed, you are depriving us of this present life, but the King of the world will raise us up to live again forever. It is for his laws that we are dying."** Let us take a deeper look at this passage. We have the strong scriptural background to reflect on our life. We worry so much about our family, health, finances, job, retirement, children, grandchildren, upcoming events. Constantly we are worried about something on daily basis. There is nothing to have reasonable everyday worries. Sometimes, I also worry about how to pay all the bills by the end of the month. Some months we make enough to pay all the bills and some months we do not. But I do not let this be the constant worry in my life. Then I begin to trust in the Lord and we find a way out. It is good to worry but the worries cannot mislead us.

There is something we need to really worry about. Do we every worry about what happens after our death?. We take the gospel so seriously sometimes out of such ignorance get ourselves into the shoes of the Sadducees, recklessly arguing about

"Teacher, Moses wrote for us, the first married a woman but died childless. Then the second and the third married her, and likewise all the seven died childless. Finally the woman also died. Now at the resurrection whose wife will that woman be?"

Our argument will be what will happen to me and to all my property after my death?

The first son of Maccabees is a great example of what happens after our death. The fact that he is put to death did not bother him a bit but he takes pride and joy that he will enjoy the life after. He is overjoyed by resurrection.

In continuation of what we talked last week end to pray for the dead. We can do the following:

1. Funeral for the departed soul. We do very well in our community. I am really happy that people take time to either come for the wake service or the funeral. We also take care of the cemetery.
2. Visit the cemetery as often as you can for two reasons. One is to remember and say a prayer for the dead which brings us also the plenary indulgences. And secondly, it is reminder of our own death. At some point of time, our journey is also headed that way.
3. Offer Holy Sacrifice of Mass for the dead. What does a mass can do for the dead? Just as we pray for others here on earth, we are encouraged by the Church to pray for souls who may be in purgatory. Why? We are all in need of grace to come into the perfection of charity. We cannot enter heaven if we have not been completely cleansed of sin and all punishment due to sin. See Catechism of the Catholic Church #1031 and 1472

Since the Mass is the "source and summit" of the Christian Life, we naturally look to that Holy Sacrifice of Christ, containing the perfect prayer, to offer for our deceased relatives and friends who may still need the help of our prayers. Priests are under a strict obligation to remember in a special way the person for whom the Mass is being offered. Often you will hear the priests say the name of the person in the part of the Mass which specifically remembers those who have gone before us. Sometimes the intention for the

Mass is listed in the bulletin or announced before the Mass.

We can't really speak of "time" since the deceased person has entered eternity, but we can speak in terms of "final purification" before entrance into heaven. We believe that a Mass offered for a departed relative or friend may help hasten that final purification which he/she may still be undergoing in purgatory.

- A. It is strongly encouraged to offer a mass on the day of their death/ birthday / wedding anniversary.
- B. Novena mass: A novena is a prayer repeated every day for 9 days. A novena mass is a catholic mass celebrated for nine consecutive days after some event, e.g. a death. Day
- C. Gregorian mass: The history of the "Thirty Mass" practice goes back to the year 590 AD in St. Andrew's Monastery in Rome, founded by St. Gregory the Great in his own family home around 570.

After his election as Pope in 590, one of the monks, Justus by name, became ill. So he admitted to a lay friend, Copiosus, that he had hidden three gold pieces among his medications years before, when he was professed a monk. Both, in fact, were former physicians. And sure enough, the other monks found the gold when seeking the medication for Justus.

The Founder monk, now Pope Gregory, hearing of this scandalous sin against Holy Poverty, called in the Abbot of his beloved monastery, and ordered the penalty of solitary confinement for Justus, even though he was dying, and ordered his burial not in the cemetery but in the garbage dump. Copiosus told his wretched friend of this decision. Moreover, the communities were to recite over his dreadful grave the words of St. Peter to Simon the Magician: "May thy money perish with thee" (Acts 8:20).

The Pope's desired result was achieved: Justus made a serious repentance and all the monks a serious examination of conscience. Justus then died, but the matter did not, for thirty days later Pope Gregory returned to the monastery filled with concern for Justus, who would now be suffering the

grim temporal punishment of Purgatory's fire for his sins. "We must," said Gregory to the Abbot, "come by charity to his aid, and as far as possible help him to escape this chastisement. Go and arrange Thirty Masses for his soul, so that for thirty consecutive days the Saving Victim is immolated for him without fail." And so it was done.

Some days later, Justus appeared in a vision to his friend Copiosus and said, "I have just received the Communion pardon and release from Purgatory because of the Masses said for me." The monks did a calculation, and noted that it was exactly thirty days since the Thirty Masses had begun for Justus. They shared this great consolation with each other, with their Abbott and with Pope Gregory, whose personal authority guarantees its truth, for he wrote the full account of it in his *Book of Dialogues*, which became very popular.

It is a forgotten tradition in some parts of the world. I am very sure that no one in this church may remember about Gregorian mass. I used to offer the Gregorian mass in the first five years of my ordination. I was in the chancery as the secretary to my Bishop. I did not have the parish commitment. Hence, I was able to offer 30 masses for 30 consecutive days for the departed souls of the purgatory. It may not be possible to do now here in our Parish. It does not mean that this tradition died. It is very prevalent in the mission countries / monasteries where priests do not have sufficient masses for the intentions.

I will be glad to arrange a priest to offer Gregorian mass for the departed souls.