

6 November 2022 - 32nd Sunday "C"

2 M 7:1-2.9-14; 2 Thess 2:16--3:5; Lk 20:27-38

Homily

The Sadducees in this Gospel are not really interested in learning anything from Jesus. They simply want to set a trap for him. Since they do not believe in the resurrection, they want to show how such a belief leads to ridiculous consequences. Jesus' answer is rather mysterious. In fact, it seems that he simply wants to show them that it is their approach that is ridiculous. They are trying to 'imagine' what the afterlife is like; and this is impossible, because we can only 'imagine' something by using 'images' from our present limited life. But the afterlife is beyond all such images and limitations. It will not be a new life; it will be the same life, but free from all the limitations of the present existence.

There is something else that I find very interesting in today's readings. It is the point of contact between the first reading, from the book of Maccabees, and the Gospel. Obviously, there is first of all an obvious point of contact in the fact that these two readings both express faith in the resurrection of the flesh. But there is another less obvious but equally important point of contact. It is the fact that the Sadducee movement has links in its origin with the Maccabean revolt. And this too can teach us something.

The first great period in the history of the people of Israel was the time of the Exodus, when the Lord formed his people through the desert experience. The second great period was the time of the exile, during which, through the teaching of his prophets, the Lord prepared the rebirth of his people. The most beautiful fruit of this period was the movement of the Hassidim, the pious, among whom were the Anawim, or Poor of the Lord.

After the return of the "little remnant" to the land of Israel, and a new domination by a foreign power, when the pagan authorities wanted to force the Jews to apostatise, the Maccabean revolt against the pagan power found support especially in the charismatic movement of the Hassidim and the Poor of the Lord.

Unfortunately, the Maccabean revolt, which was originally a deeply spiritual movement, soon became a political power that accepted several compromises with the pagan authorities, so much so that one of the Maccabees became king of Israel and High Priest, without belonging to either the royal or priestly family. This was too much for the Lord's faithful, who separated themselves from this power in a

Document extrait du [site de l'abbaye Notre-Dame de Scourmont](#), qui se trouve sur le territoire de Forges, à sept kilomètres au sud de la ville de Chimay, en Belgique. Notre-Dame de Scourmont est une abbaye de l'Ordre Cistercien de la Stricte Observance.

revolt. From this spiritual revolt three great spiritual groups were born: the Pharisees, the Sadducees and the Essenes (a group with a "monastic" character, well known especially since the discoveries of Qumran).

The Pharisees and Sadducees had a great and profound spiritual influence on the people of Israel, preparing them for the coming of the Messiah. But when the Messiah came, these movements had lost their spiritual lifeblood. Preoccupied with preserving their traditions, they were unable to open themselves to the new light brought by Jesus. They were now two very conservative parties, both religious and political, as those who, having acquired power, honour and wealth, have no interest in seeing things change.

Is this not a lesson and a warning for us? It invites us to be always very careful, as an ecclesial community and as a monastic community, not to fall into the danger of sclerosis and lukewarmness. Many movements in the history of the Church began with great charismatic enthusiasm only to become fossilised later. Monasticism has only remained in the Church because it has periodically experienced moments of reform and conversion.

What is really important, for us as for the Sadducees, is not to discover, through our imagination - or through private revelations - what life after death will be like, but rather to continue unceasingly, as a community as well as individuals, a movement of conversion. Only in this way can we, at the end of our earthly pilgrimage, be reunited with all our brothers and sisters in God's eternal "today".

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