

REFLECTION

As we move closer to the end of the liturgical year, our Scripture readings have more and more to do with the end of our earthly life or the end of the world. This Sunday, our Scripture readings speak to us about the hope we have in the promise of our resurrection, which comes from the Resurrection of Jesus for our salvation.

In our first reading from 2 Maccabees, seven sons and their mother are tortured and killed because they will not turn away from the Mosaic Law. They withstand the torture because they believe God will raise them up to life again. Their hope is in resurrection. In our Gospel reading from Luke, the Sadducees, who did not believe in resurrection, try to trip up Jesus with a hypothetical situation involving a widow who marries seven brothers without bearing a child. But Jesus confounds them by affirming the truth of resurrection: “That the dead will rise even Moses made known in the passage about the bush, when he called out ‘Lord,’ the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, and he is not God of the dead, but of the living, for to him all are alive.” We, too, can look forward to eternal life.

Our ultimate hope, then, is to live forever with God, to have peace and joy beyond imagining. But as I was reflecting on this, I began to wonder about what are our hopes while we are here on earth? What are our hopes for *this* life? Some people hope for material things which they expect will give them a better life. Beyond material possessions, though, I think most people hope for success in their careers, good relationships (finding *the one*), good health, security and safety for themselves and their loved ones.

All these things mentioned above are good things, but perhaps the Gospel is calling us to look even beyond those things. Very often in the Gospels Jesus tells the people about the kingdom of God, and maybe that is what we should set our sights on as well. We are called, I think, to hope for a time when *all* people have the necessities of life; when equal rights are accorded to all; a time when there is peace and justice all over, for while many of us are hoping for success and security, so many others in our world are just hoping to make it to the next day; to live without fear of torture or arbitrary violence.

And yet, while these things that were just mentioned call us beyond our own desires and aspirations, perhaps we are called to go beyond even those things. Perhaps the object of our hope is to have a deeper relationship with God, and to have the willingness to always do God’s will. To live out this hope is to be willing to change our ideas of what security, safety, and success really mean. We may realize that our ultimate security comes from knowing God’s unconditional love for us. To live out this hope may mean that we open ourselves to reading the “signs of the times,” looking at others with the compassion of Christ, and reaching out to those in need. We may realize that *our* conception of the kingdom is not what is being called for.

As our hopes go higher and higher (or deeper and deeper?), we can live in confidence that we are not alone. As St. Paul reminds the Thessalonians in our second reading, “But the Lord is faithful; he will strengthen you and guard you from the evil one.” May we live in hope, and bring hope to others!

May God continue to bless us all, and may He “encourage” our hearts and “strengthen” us “in every good deed and word.”

In Christ,

Fr. Phil, CP