

The liturgy of the word on this Sunday, even as we near the end of the liturgical year, invites us to contemplate on the mystery of God in relation to human death and life! Jesus assures us that there is life after death because our God is the God of life. A class of teenagers were asked the question what death would be like for an atheist. The answer given by one student was: “**All dressed up but nowhere to go.**” We are dressed up and we have a home to go to. During the month of November, as we see things around us in nature get dry and again get new life, the Church asks us to reflect on the mystery of life and death. The month began with the celebration of All Saints Day and All Souls Day. Throughout this month we are asked to pray for the dead, especially our friends, family, and benefactors.

Everyone on this earth at some time will experience the loss of someone they love and their own death too. Belief in the life after death is the most powerful and motivating force all through the ages and even now in our lives. **This belief in eternal life acts as the foundation of our hope in this life** – a hope that provides courage and endurance. This is what we see in the story of the Maccabees brothers that we heard read in the 1st reading of today. They are not afraid to be killed because of their belief in a life beyond death. They are able to endure suffering because their faith provides meaning and purpose.

Their courage is based on trust in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who ***‘is God, not of the dead, but of the living; for to him all people are in fact alive’***. It is about a choice based on God’s promise of eternal life, as the words of these martyrs illustrate: ***‘The King of the world will raise us up, since it is for his laws that we die, to live again forever.***

Second Reading St. Paul prays for the believers to persevere in faith. He reminds us that God our Father ***‘has given us his love and, through his grace, such inexhaustible comfort and such sure hope’***. This is the faith that gives ultimate meaning to our lives. And it is the faith we express in a special way in the month of November when we remember all our deceased loved ones and pray for them.

In the Gospel we see the Sadducees who came to Jesus with what they thought was a ‘case’, which would prove how ridiculous this idea of resurrection was. But Jesus answered their question saying that the resurrected bodies will be different, from our earthly bodies. St. Paul calls it ***“Spiritual bodies”***. We will be like the angels. Our hope of resurrection is based on the power and love that God has shown us by raising Jesus from the dead. In John 10:10, Jesus declares, ***“I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.”*** In John 14:6, Jesus once again reminds us, ***“I am the way, and the truth, and the life”***. Jesus’ act of raising of Lazarus was only a sign of the fulfilment of His promise to Nicodemus: ***“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life”***

All religions offer different ways to achieve this same goal. Without becoming disappointed, all can establish a good relationship with God by removing their sins and following a life of salvation. Every day we should foresee that great and joyful day of our life while making sacrifices and remaining faithful to the Lord.

Once upon a time, in ancient times, there lived a king. He was both wealthy and curious. One day, out of curiosity. The king left his palace and made his way to the passage outside his city. There, on a road that was frequented by many people, he decides to test his own people. The king places a huge boulder on the road. Then, he ran and hid in the nearby shrubs. "This should be interesting," he mumbles to himself. There, on a road that was frequented by many people, he decides to test his own people. The king places a huge boulder on the road. Then, he ran and hid in the nearby shrubs. "This should be interesting," he mumbles to himself.

The king observes many people from his spot. First, a wealthy merchant arrived. Upon seeing the huge boulder in the middle of the road he exclaimed loudly, "What is the king doing? Isn't he supposed to maintain these roads properly?" So, the wealthy merchant and his men went around the huge boulder. The king was surprised. "How unexpected," he thought. After that, many a man came. All of them blamed the king, some yelled. But none of them moved the boulder. And then, along came a peasant with a load of vegetables.

Upon seeing the boulder in the middle of the road, he stops. The king looks at the peasant, intently following his actions from that point onwards. To the king's surprise, the peasant laid his load of vegetables down and began pushing the boulder. The peasant succeeds after much sweating and pushing. After doing so, the peasant starts to gather his things. When he was doing so, a purse lying on the ground caught his eye. "A purse?" he thought. The peasant wondered where it came from. Upon closer inspection, the peasant finds a note from the king stuck to the purse, "Whoever removes the boulder from the road, this is a gift to them" The peasant found many gold coins inside the purse and learned a value lesson that many failed to understand. "Every obstacle presents an opportunity to improve our condition," the peasant whispers, smiling as he walks away with a purse full of gold coins.

It is true, as we journey through life, we face numerous hurdles, suffering, loss, and pain. Beneath every hurdle, there is a golden pouch called eternal life. Today's readings challenge us to renew our faith in the Lord of our lives, who rewards us with Eternal Life.

God Bless You.