

32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

In today's Gospel, we hear about an encounter between Jesus and some Sadducees. The Sadducees were literal interpreters of the written Law of Moses, which means that they were in disagreement with the position of the Pharisees, who offered an oral interpretation of the Law of Moses.

The Sadducees are described in this Gospel as opponents to the belief in resurrection. In the dialogue presented here, the Sadducees use the example of Levirate marriage, found in the Law of Moses, to disprove belief in the resurrection. According to Deuteronomy 25:5-10, if a man died without producing an heir, the man's brother should marry his wife and the offspring of this union would inherit the property and carry on the name of the man who had died.

Jesus argues from the same written Law of Moses to show that there is resurrection. Using the texts from the Book of Exodus, chapter 3, that describe Moses' encounter with God in the burning bush, Jesus shows that God is the God of the living, not the dead. Here Jesus uses the same method and texts of the Sadducees to counter them. As the Gospel text suggests, he beat them at their own game!

More importantly, in this discourse Jesus shows the limits of our imaginations when it comes to eternal life. The Sadducees argued against resurrection because of the limits of earthly existence. They did not imagine another possibility for existence and relationship with God. Jesus proposes that the possibilities of resurrected life are beyond our imaginations. Jesus' conclusion suggests something else as well: To spend time worrying about resurrected life is to miss the point. The point is eternal relationship with God is possible, for God is the God of the living, "... for to him all are alive."