

REFLECTIONS 32nd Sunday – 10th NOVEMBER 2019

1st Reading: 2 Maccabees &P:1-2, 9-14

Psalm 16: *Lord, when your glory appears, my joy will be full.*

2nd Reading: 2 Thessalonians 2:16-3:5

GOSPEL: LUKE 20:27-38

Some of the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Jesus with a question. "Teacher," they said, "Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies and leaves a wife but no children, the man must marry the widow and raise up offspring for his brother. Now there were seven brothers. The first one married a woman and died childless. The second and then the third married her, and in the same way the seven died, leaving no children. Finally, the woman died too. Now then, at the resurrection whose wife will she be, since the seven were married to her?"

Jesus replied, "The people of this age marry and are given in marriage. But those who are considered worthy of taking part in the age to come and in the resurrection from the dead will neither marry nor be given in marriage, and they can no longer die; for they are like the angels. They are God's children, since they are children of the resurrection. But in the account of the burning bush, even Moses showed that the dead rise, for he calls the Lord 'the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' He is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for to him all are alive."

REFLECTION by Peter Clarke, Kiama parishioner and Friend of Carmel ...

When I open my old missal to consider this Sunday's scripture, I read that the theme of the selected readings is "**However cruelly the world may treat us, we can always rejoice in the glorious future promised us by Christ, when we will be filled with the vision of God's glory**" So we read of the torture and death of the seven brothers who were possibly Maccabean warriors, we read of Paul's frustration that the message is not spreading quickly enough and the '**...interference of bigoted**



and evil people..." and Jesus answers the Sadducees trick question with reference to God of the living.

As our worldview develops, our understanding can and should undergo change. So, in the words of Michael Morwood* and some very limited knowledge of Scripture studies let's consider this:

The theme given smacks of what Marx described as "The opiate of the masses"; put up with the trials of this world because you are promised wonders in the afterlife. Morwood writes: "*... we acquired an understanding of salvation as being primarily concerned with "getting to heaven" or "saving our souls". For many centuries much of the church's missionary effort and self-understanding was driven by this same understanding and concern*" (p13)

But we can imagine a different way, a different image of our God, a different understanding of salvation. Again from Morwood: "*What if, still being beyond and greater than the sum total of creation, God was incarnated into all of creation so that all of creation is infused with, sustained by, driven by the energy that is of God?*" (p 36). This vision means that our God is immediately present in all that we meet, all that we see, hear, and observe. God's vision is not something for an afterlife, it is present and requires our attention in the here and now. "*All creation is permeated with the presence of God. The wonder of human existence is that human beings can be conscious of this presence and give it a name... We can marvel at who and what we are. We can give praise and thanks on behalf of all creation; we can allow this faith to shape our lives and the destiny of life on this planet*" (p40)

So, our Maccabean warriors believed that Greek influence was corrupting Jewish beliefs and fought and died to resist this corruption. Jesus and Paul preached a good news of the imminent coming of the Kingdom of God to replace the Kingdom of evil. They preached Repentance by which they meant Conversion; that is, it's not sufficient to say "Sorry" unless you change the actions that caused the evil.

And today, people of good will are still carrying on trying to change the old message. They can recognise that spark of the divine in others and in creation. Think of the 39 refugees who died in Britain seeking a better life. Yes, some may have been there for selfish reasons but some would have been there to secure a better life for their families. Similarly, for those we hold prisoner on Manus and Nauru. Do we see the spark of the divine in them or do we see a danger to ourselves? Or do we care?

Recently a 73 year old grandmother who participated in the Environmental Revolution was reported as saying she was prepared to die to try to secure a safe future for her grandchildren. Love that strives even to death if necessary. Perhaps it reflects this final extract from Morwood. *"The natural world is the larger, sacred community to which we belong. To be alienated from this community is to become destitute in all that makes us human. To damage this community is to diminish our own existence"* (p41)

Live like Jesus did, and the world will listen.'
Mahatma Gandhi

And the gospel? The best I can offer is that it represents a further change in our worldview. Clearly in our society we would not countenance a woman treated as property and passed between brothers to secure heirs for the dynastic line. However in Jesus's time a widow without support lived a precarious life and so the Mosaic Law offered some security. But what does Jesus say about an afterlife. In some ways all he does is quote the Law. I think what he is really saying is "We don't know what the afterlife holds.

If we can see the spark of the divine in all things we can recognise a love worth dying for. Perhaps equally important we have a love worth living for in service of others and our world. And in our difficult times we have hope that others of our community, recognising the spark of the divine in us, are there to assist us in our need.

The fact that we can recognise this, can give praise for this, is truly the phenomenon of humankind.

* Michael Morwood msc "TOMORROW'S CATHOLIC Understanding God and Jesus in a New Millennium"



INTERCESSIONS

*As people of hope we pray to God - the God of the living. We pray in response: **God of life, hear our prayer.***

- As people of the resurrection, we pray that we may recognise that every person is created in God's image and likeness with dignity, value and worth regardless of race, gender and class. We pray: **God of the living, hear our prayer.**
- As people of the resurrection, we pray that we may recognise that salvation is found in Jesus through being part of a new humanity, a new community. We pray: **God of the living, hear our prayer.**
- As people of the resurrection, we continue to remember the plight of ethnic Rohingya fleeing persecution that their dignity and human rights be respected. We pray: **God of the living, hear our prayer.**
- As people of the resurrection, we pray that God will bless all relationships in the church and in our communities that are faithful, loving, justice-making and life-giving. We pray: **God of the living, hear our prayer.**
- As people of the resurrection, we pray that God will send bountiful rain, especially to communities suffering from drought and water shortages. We pray: **God of the living, hear our prayer**