

## The 32nd Sunday of Ordinary Time — November 10, 2019

We conclude our Book Study this week, and what a great experience it has been, indeed ! Each chapter built carefully upon the next.

### **Surrender. Bless. Love. Give. Pray. See. Heal. Trust.**

In the final chapter, 'Be not Afraid,' Linda Rooney says :

**“All of our responses in life come from either love or fear”**

What a delightful reflection ! Imagine if on a daily basis we were to check our responses to see which responses are of love and which are of fear ..... and at the end of the day if I were to take an inventory of my responses ..... how would this look ? How many of my responses would be of fear and how many of love ? Interesting reflection indeed.

The Readings this weekend provide us a great insight into this kind of imaginative frame-work. The 1st Reading from the Second Book of Maccabees is a powerful story of Fearlessness and Trust. A little historical background may help us understand this story better. Alexander the Great, more than 320 years before the coming of Christ, had conquered most of 'the known world.' He was only 20 years of age when he came to power after the death of his father. His passion was to rule the world, and during a mere 12-year reign he ruthlessly accomplished this task. He conquered every nation from Sicily to Egypt to India, and this included Israel. After his death, his kingdom was divided among 4 of his Generals. One of those who came to power sometime after his death was King Antiochus IV, who reigned during the story of the Maccabees.

Chapter 1 of Maccabees provides these details. Antiochus decides to create religious unity throughout his kingdom. He thus makes it a crime for the Jews to practice their Jewish faith. Circumcision

was forbidden. Copies of their scripture were burned. Jews could not follow their dietary laws, or celebrate their customary feasts. The worship of Greek gods and goddesses was required. Some of the Jews gave into the Greeks, while others fought hard to hold onto their faith and belief in God.

So enter the Maccabees..... Martyrs for the Faith before the Christian era begins. Fearless brothers, and fearless family :

**“It is my choice to die at the hands of men with the hope God gives of being raised up by him,”** the 4th brother says.

This is a fundamental faith and hope in the Resurrection. It is the faith of a whole family! It is a response that is born out of love not fear ! It is a response of faith in a Living God, and a belief that this God cares, and through faith in Him we will come to the fullness of life. And it frames the important questions: What do you believe about the Resurrection? What difference does it make in your life?

This is a natural lead into the Gospel. We move from Maccabees to Jesus' time and the experience of the Holy Roman Empire, and there are still a lot of issues surrounding the question of life after death! The Sadducees were members of the Jewish aristocracy and the Jewish priesthood. They were the arch conservatives in Jesus' time. They did not believe in angels, spirits, or the resurrection of the dead on the last day. They were law abiding citizens, and were proud of it. There was no 'quid pro quo' with these folks. What they were trying to do in today's Gospel was to prove, through an extreme example, that belief in the resurrection of the dead was nonsense.

They based their example on a law from the Book of Leviticus. Which was the book of law in the Old Testament. The law was known as 'levirate marriage' and it stated : “if a man died and he

had no children, then his brother was supposed to marry the man's widow, and through her bring children into the world." The culture of that time believed that a woman needed a man to care for her and especially to support her. Without a male relative in her life, she would be destitute. Thus, the understanding from those days of the prayer for widows and orphans ..... they were at the bottom of the food-chain. We have improved a little over these 2,000 years ?????

Now another significant issue was that a Jewish man could have two wives, there was no law against adding another wife. So maybe there was some 'quid pro quo' after all ! And who made the laws to begin with ?

Now, given the circumstances in that culture, it was the belief that if a man died and his brother married the widow, that would preserve the name and memory of the dead brother, it would keep in the family whatever property the brother had, and ensure that the needs of the widow would be provided. Interesting ????? The Sadducees didn't believe in an afterlife ..... but even if it were possible, in their minds it would be very similar to life as we know it now.

And there's the rub ..... that is exactly what Jesus want to address in this episode !

1. Do you believe in the Resurrection ?
2. What is it you believe ? Do you believe in my Death and my Resurrection ?

3. What difference is it making in your life?

4. Would others know by the way you live your life that I suffered and died for you ?

Now, that is the 'kicker' question .... Do you believe it? ..... Would others know from the way you live your life that you are a follower of mine ?

Here is the connecting point to our Small Group Study, and to our lives. **Surrender. Bless. Love. Give. Pray. See. Heal. Trust.**

Linda Rooney says :

“As we conclude our walk together along the disciples path, I invite you to remember the steps we've taken so that together we may renew our commitment to walk them each day.”

—Fr. Gerry Hurley