Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

**Resurrection of the Dead**  Thirty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time/C  November 10, 2013 10:45 AM  2 Mc 7:1-2, 9-14;  2 Thes 2:16—3:5;  Lk 20:27-38  (A community of faith and hope then becomes a herald of coming good; that’s what this parish is called to be.)

Well, today the gospel and the first reading from the Book of Maccabees and the epistle are all talking about something very important, in fact, according to St. Paul the most important article of our creed: the **belief in the resurrection of the dead**. St. Paul flatly claims that if Christ were not raised from the dead, then all faith in him is in vain. And we need to quickly add that if Jesus has been raised from the dead, and we believe that to be so, then **those who believe in him should be living a new life**, not a life just like everybody else, but a new life, in which we already share in some way the blessings of our own **resurrection**. This is clearly the teaching of St. Paul in his letter to the Romans. It is clearly the meaning of Baptism.

But of course at this time, at this stage in our lives, **this participation in the resurrection is not physical, but rather begins within us in our souls, our minds, our hearts, our wills, and it directs our lives in the pattern of Jesus**. Physically we continue to live as Jesus did himself during his earthly sojourn amid all the vicissitudes, the pains, the frustrations, the illnesses, the accidents, the travails that plague life on earth. And we share grief. But, as St. Paul points out in his first letter to the Thessalonians, “not like those who have no hope.” We share grief, but not like those who have no hope. This is all the more reason why our lives must be attentive in responding to every challenge with the inner resources of Christ. We have to face not only our physical needs for survival, but we also must face the battles of spiritual warfare.

All living things are in a battle for survival, but only we human beings are involved in spiritual warfare. Now what is that? **Spiritual warfare includes all ways in which a wholesome, positive, loving attitude is attacked, undermined, or defeated.** And as you can observe, very sadly, this positive attitude of life can be defeated, can be destroyed in people. St. Paul asked rhetorically, “If God is for us, who is against us.” But he knew full well that **the evil one is against us and wants to undo all the good God does and mock everything that is holy or good.**

Nothing can be of greater assistance in our daily struggle than the **building up of the virtues given us in our Baptism, primarily faith, hope, and divine love.** This requires
daily attention. By the time Howard Hughes died, and for those of you who may not know, he was at one point the richest man in the world, the people he trusted to take care of him had dissipated his entire fortune. Where it went, nobody knows. In a like manner, if we put our trust in the wrong things, the wrong people, or the wrong ideas, they will steal away the inner riches we have from God, and we’ll end up empty.

One of our problems in dealing with the future and our expectations is that we tend to think of eternal life or life with God as a mere extension of what we know already. This was exactly the problem with the Sadducees in today’s gospel reading, and Jesus told them that they were badly mistaken to imagine that life with God is going to be just like life on earth, just an extension of what we already know. Only rarely does anyone get a glimpse of what life with God is like, and these Sadducees were totally clueless. No, life with God is unimaginable in its goodness, its beauty, its pleasure. As St. Paul points out in I Corinthians, “Eye has not seen, ear has not heard, and no one’s imagination has imagined what God has in store for those who love him.”

But we do know that the saints in heaven have been victorious in the struggle against evil in their spiritual warfare, both the evil within themselves and the evil in the world. This struggle involved for them and it involves for us witness to the truth of Christ, and works toward the establishment and growth of God’s kingdom begun in Christ, begun but not finished. That’s the state we are in now: the work of God has been begun but not finished. This means concern for justice on this earth and for all the works of mercy. The saints spur us on to victory that involves keeping our eyes on the prize, and the only prize is what God promises. A community of faith and hope then becomes a herald of coming good, a herald in the world of coming good. That’s what this parish is called to be, a herald of coming good in the midst of Lisle and Naperville, Illinois.

The pessimism and the cynicism we see and hear all around us are just temptations to give up faith and hope in God. When we resist these temptations, we are doing a service to ourselves and others. We are serving God. We are actually evangelizing, that is, we are spreading the good news. We are resisting the bad news. We are refusing to let the bad news have a purchase inside of us. And make no mistake about it, whether people are aware of it or not, we all have an inbuilt desire for this good news. This is perhaps what Jesus was alluding to when he said, “You are the light of the world.”