

32ND SUNDAY - ORD. (C)
**AM I READY TO DIE RATHER THAN TRANSGRESS THE LAW OF
GOD?**

Some people feel that we come from nothing, and we shall vanish as if we had never been. But in many cultures, there is the belief that there is life after death. This is shown sometimes by the way the dead are buried; in Ghana for example, some money was put in the coffin for the dead person to buy water on the way to his or her final destination, among other rituals. Life after death and the resurrection of the dead was a belief held by the Jews long before the coming of Christ.

The mother and her seven sons had that belief, and knew that everything they had come from God. They were ready to die rather than transgress the law of their ancestors, given to them by God. They were forced to eat pork which was against the law of the Jews, and they were not ready to break the law of God. The third son was ready to offer his tongue and hands, and said: "I got these from Heaven, and because of His laws I disdain them, and from Him I hope to get them back again". The fourth expressed the idea of the future resurrection by saying: "One cannot but choose to die at the hands of men and to cherish the hope that God gives of being raised again by Him.

The Sadducees of old did not believe in the resurrection of the body. They challenged Jesus about this, hoping to show absurdity of such a belief. But He made them aware that God is the God of the living and not of the dead. He told them that life after death would be different from life on earth. After death there will be no marriage or remarriage. After death we shall be like God; (1Jn.3:2). God is providing something better than anything one can find on this earth.

Jesus always told His disciples that He would be killed and on the third day He would rise. Our faith is based on the resurrection of Christ. We profess it every day during Mass. St. Paul told the Corinthians that if Christ has not been raised then Christians are the most pitiable people in the world. He said: "But if Christ is preached as raised from the dead, how can some among you

say there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then neither has Christ been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then empty too is our preaching; empty, too, your faith...and your faith is vain," (1Cor.15:12-17).

Do I really mean what I say when I pray the Creed, and profess faith in the resurrection of the dead? Is it my firm desire to experience life after death during which I shall receive the perfect and transformed body which will never see decay? How am I, then, preparing myself towards that final day of earthly life?

I have to follow the example of the seven brothers who did not want to break the law of the Lord. They remind me that if I lose parts of my body, or all of my body for the sake of the kingdom, I will get them back from God. Everything I possess comes from Him. The message of Christ also reminds me that, many things we cherish on earth are going to end when we die.

Am I ready to die rather than transgress the law of the Lord? What does the law of the Lord say to me now? The woman and her seven children were forced to eat pork, but they refused; what am I to reject in order to be faithful to God? Is the resurrection giving me hope to live out my vows or promises as a priest faithfully? Is the resurrection giving you hope to live according to the promises you made to God as a Christian? There is a great amount of pressure around us to force us to abandon our faith. Are we giving in to the pressure from those who do not believe in God, and life after death, and thus breaking the natural law written in our hearts, and what the Church has entrusted to us? How many of us prefer to die rather than to sin against God?

St. Paul prayed for the Thessalonians that the Lord might encourage their hearts and strengthen them in every good deed and word. He asked them also to pray for him and his companions so that the word of the Lord might be glorified. We also need to pray in order to be strengthened to resist any temptation we may encounter in professing our faith.