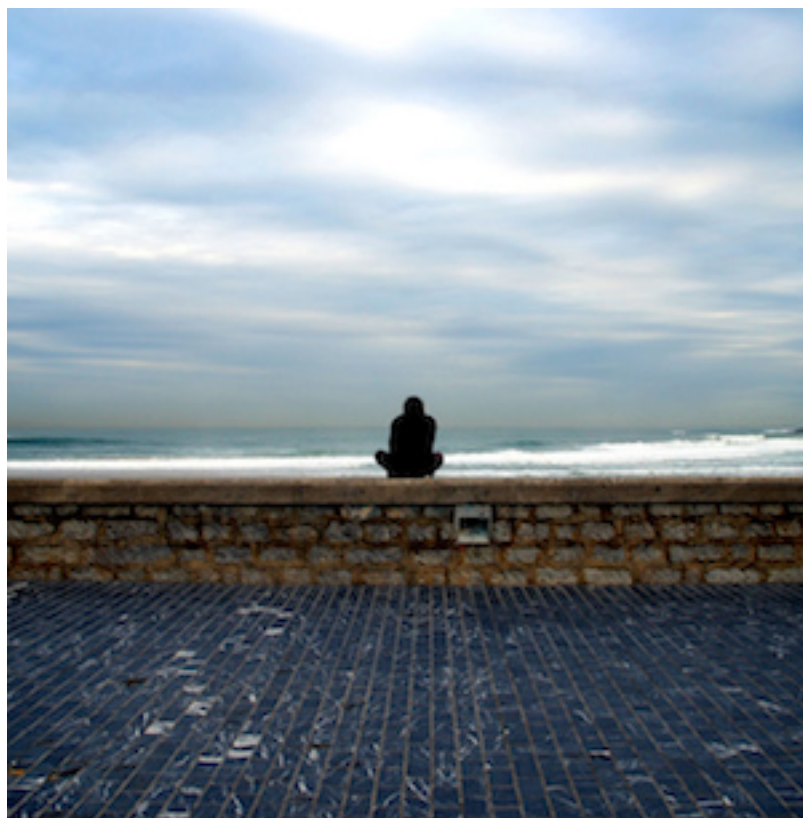


Commentary to the 32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)



Some Sadducees, denying belief in resurrection, pose a hypothetical question to Jesus about seven brothers who, after each other's death, marry the same woman. The Sadducees ask whose wife that woman will be at the resurrection. Jesus replies that those who are deemed worthy to share to the resurrection of the dead are not married to anyone. They can no longer die, and they themselves are all children of God. Then Jesus points out that the Sadducees should know this from the passage in Exodus where God appears to Moses in the burning bush. The Lord said to Moses, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. It is evident, Jesus says, that the Lord is "not God of the dead, but of the living; for to him all are alive. Life Implications In Luke's gospel, Jesus seems quite reticent in talking at length about the specifics of life after death. To the Sadducees' question, Jesus simply replies that after resurrection there will no longer be a need of bearing children we will all be children of God. In other episodes of the gospel there is the same reticence. Jesus alludes to gaining a reward in heaven and the coming of the Son of Man in glory.

Lazarus in a parable will be carried by angels to the bosom of Abraham. In his last hour, Jesus promises Paradise to the thief who is dying with him on a cross. The principal focus, however, of Jesus' teaching is on the present. "Blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe itâ?? (Luke 11:28). They will be counted among the blessed at the Lord's coming in judgment. Jesus' attention to the supreme importance of responding to the reality of the present moment is evident not only in his teaching, but in his own life. Luke tells us that when Jesus realized that his own death was imminent, he did not explain to his disciples what would happen to him after his death. Rather, he prayed, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup away from me; still, not my will but yours be doneâ?? (Luke 22: 42).

It is in the reality of that moment that Jesus hears the word of God, and keeps it. He could put his life into God's hands at that moment because he trusted that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob would

not abandon him to the power of death. We encounter God and can respond to his will only in the narrow gate of our own present moment, our day of salvation. We do not encounter God in the feelings of past moments that we try to hang on to, or in the feelings of future moments that we try to imagine. Now is the only time for the decision of faith and for the works of love. Because God is the God of the living, when we encounter God in faith we are in the presence of all who are in communion with God.

Each Sunday in the Eucharistic Prayer, we sing "Holy, Holy, Holy" with the Risen Lord and with all who are alive in him. It is a natural trajectory from the good news of Jesus' affirmation that our life as God's children does not end with death to the good news that Pope Paul VI gave us to affirm in the Credo of the People of God. "We believe in the communion of all the faithful of Christ, those who are pilgrims on earth, the dead who are being purified, and the blessed in heaven, all together forming one church; and we believe that in this communion, the merciful love of God and his saints is always attentive to our prayers.

Father Andrew M. Greeley