

Homily. 32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time. Year.C. 9/10 November 2019.

The Sadducees group told Jesus a ridiculous legalistic story because they held a belief which went like this; if something wasn't written down in the Hebrew Scriptures, our Old Testament, exactly and in the form of words they expected, then it couldn't be true. Since the word 'resurrection' wasn't written they deduced that there wasn't one. The matter of marrying deceased brother's wives was written, so their crazy story gets concocted in order to try and trick Jesus.

In our times we'd describe the Sadducees as biblical literalists and fundamentalists of the worst, most legalistic kind. Believe me, there are plenty of people around like them today in every religion. In fact, you'll find such people in every group, holding that unless it's written it can't be thought, let alone believed in or done.

In this matter of resurrection, which is our focus, Jesus was more in tune with the Pharisees than the Sadducees. He believed strongly in the resurrection from the dead, that the resurrection was implied in the Old Testament teaching and in stories such as that found in the 1st reading. Jesus summed up His belief in His reply to the Sadducees silly story when He said as we've heard that; 'God is not a God of the dead, but of the living, for to God all people are in fact alive.'

Remember Zacchaeus from last weekend? When Jesus stopped at the foot of the Sycamore tree, looked up and spoke to him, Zacchaeus quickly shinnied down, joyfully welcoming Jesus into his life and home.

He sensed his chance to change, to be converted and freed at last from the trap of theft, deceit and life sapping isolation that he'd woven for himself. Repenting of his past and promising restitution, Jesus announced that salvation had come to him for he, too, was a son and heir of God's promises to Abraham. Conversion and hope such as this is only possible and makes any sense if we believe that God is alive, and that in God, we are living and will forever be alive.

As Christians, we have faith in the risen Lord is risen living within us, that Jesus Spirit is moving in our lives and in history itself, and that our destiny is to become like God and be with God in love for all eternity. Our faith makes change, conversion and renewal not only possible but an essential part of our journey through life. Recently canonised St. John Cardinal Henry Newman wrote that change and growth is the only evidence of life, adding that to live is to have changed and to be perfect is to have changed often.

Convictions like this are only possible if we believe in the resurrection of Christ for our salvation and that of the whole world. Without such belief now doesn't matter, because there is no lasting tomorrow, nothing to hope for or work towards. It's the reality of the resurrection of Jesus and our belief and sharing in it that gives us hope today with meaning, love and care for all of our tomorrows. This resurrection faith is at the heart of our Church and of the liturgy we are celebrating with the joy of Zacchaeus newly alive against the deathly thinking of those who have no hope.