

Homily for the 32<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2019

***I believe in the Resurrection of the Body***

On Friday I watched the Peter Jackson movie on the 1<sup>st</sup> World War. Jackson is best known for the Lord of the Rings and Hobbit movies. This movie, ***They Will not Grow Old*** was made in 2018 for the Imperial War Museum in London. The narration of this 90-minute film is told by WWI British servicemen. Beginning with their recruitment, the film reaches its climax with a battalion storming the German Front. Along the way, archived footage of the actual advance is narrated by men who witnessed by their participation the horror of this battle. There are countless images of those killed by mortar and machine gun attacks. The film concludes with the Armistice, November 11<sup>th</sup>, 1918 and the surreal experience recounted by the soldiers where at 11 AM the guns went silent. Upon their return to Britain they could not understand how people who had not experienced the Western Front didn't want to hear about their firsthand accounts and in many places, they were met by signs in shop windows that read:

***“Servicemen need not apply for work.”***

***They will Not Grow Old*** points out not only the horror courage and confusion that was the First World War but how the finality of such horrific deaths led so many subsequently in the 20<sup>th</sup> century to conclude that with death there is nothing more.

This film was timely for me to watch, not only because of Remembrance Day but also because of our readings appointed for this Sunday.

In the reading from the Book of Maccabees we have narrated the story representing a horrific time in Jewish History. Recounting the time 140 years before the birth of Jesus, Jewish religion is under siege by an evil Greek king with the megalomaniac name of Antiochus Epiphanes IV. Like Greek tyrants who came before him, he was bent on the mission of making the world Greek. To that end terrible things were happening to the Jewish people. The Temple in Jerusalem was turned into a brothel; the Torah and other Scriptures were burned; and the People of Yahweh were forced to eat swine's flesh with the consequence being tortured to death if they refused.

Today's reading chronicles the story of seven brothers and their mother who refuse to comply with the pork diet. The most gruesome details are left out of the text that we heard today. I would invite you to take time later today to read 2<sup>nd</sup> Maccabees 7 in its entirety.

What does come through loud and clear in the lectionary reading is how this family could see beyond the horror of what they experienced to the hope for the glorious Resurrection beyond the grave. Imagine what it would be like to in turn see your brothers tortured and killed until, it was your turn. Imagine what it would have been like to be the mother of these seven boys who saw them each brutally killed and was then killed herself.

Before her 7<sup>th</sup> son is killed the king tries to seduce him to be a turncoat, offering him wealth and position within his government if he will only eat the porkchop. But listen to what she says to her youngest son:

***“My son have pity on me. I carried you nine months in my womb, and nursed you for three years, and have reared you and brought you up to this point in your life and have taken care of you. <sup>28</sup> I beg you, my child, to look at the heaven and the earth and see everything that is in them and recognize that God did not make them out of things that existed. And in the same way the human race came into being. <sup>29</sup> Do not fear this butcher but prove worthy of your brothers. Accept death, so that in God’s mercy I may get you back again along with your brothers.”<sup>1</sup>***

Wow, what a mother. What courage and hope in the Resurrection. A hope that had been instilled in the other sons as well whose words to their torturers were read for us today:

***Son 1: “What do you intend to ask and learn from us? For we are ready to die rather than transgress the laws of our ancestors.”<sup>2</sup>***

***Son 2: “You accursed wretch, you dismiss us from this present life, but the King of the universe will raise us up to an everlasting renewal of life, because we have died for his laws.”<sup>3</sup>***

Speaking of his tongue, which had been torn from his brothers the third son declared:

***“I got these from Heaven, and because of his laws I disdain them, and from him I hope to get them back again.”<sup>4</sup>***

And finally, today’s text it concludes with the words of the 4<sup>th</sup> son:

***“One cannot but choose to die at the hands of mortals and to cherish the hope God gives of being raised again by him. But for you there will be no resurrection to life!”<sup>5</sup>***

Here we see so clearly expressed the faith of those who with David in today’s psalm confidently declares:

***Guard me as the apple of the eye;***

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<sup>1</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition\*](#). (1993). (2 Mac 7:27–29). Washington, DC: National Council of Churches of Christ.

<sup>2</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition\*](#). (1993). (2 Mac 7:2). Washington, DC: National Council of Churches of Christ.

<sup>3</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition\*](#). (1993). (2 Mac 7:9). Washington, DC: National Council of Churches of Christ.

<sup>4</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition\*](#). (1993). (2 Mac 7:11). Washington, DC: National Council of Churches of Christ.

<sup>5</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition\*](#). (1993). (2 Mac 7:14). Washington, DC: National Council of Churches of Christ.

*hide me in the shadow of your wings,<sup>6</sup>*

*As for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness;  
when I awake, I shall be satisfied, beholding your likeness.<sup>7</sup>*

It is this same hope that is on display in today's Gospel. Like many of our contemporaries, the Sadducees did not believe in the Resurrection. They thought when you are dead, that is it. So, they put to Jesus a problem of seven brothers, who die, not by torture, but due to natural causes. In turn the same woman marries each brother. Thinking they have Jesus where he will be trapped, they ask about to which will she be married in the Resurrection. Jesus answer is one of the most concise explanations of the life beyond life we have anywhere in the Bible.

*Those who belong to this age marry and are given in marriage; <sup>35</sup> but those who are considered worthy of a place in that age and in the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage. <sup>36</sup> Indeed they cannot die anymore, because they are like angels and are children of God, being children of the resurrection.<sup>8</sup>*

Here are the things to take note of, reinforcing what the Maccabees reading highlighted. There are two ages. This age where there is the horror of war, evil and torture but also the beauty of the sacrament of marriage. There is then the age that is to come where there will be no marriage because we will be like the angels. Now note Jesus does not say we will be angels but like them. That is, we will be immortal. In that age we will no longer have blood families representative of this age, but we will be members of the family of God. This is a family anticipated now in the Church but will be fulfilled in heaven where we will all be celibate children of the Resurrection.

On this Remembrance Day Weekend where the horror and courage documented in ***They Will Not Grow Old*** and the story of 2<sup>nd</sup> Maccabees inspire us to believe ever greater confidence that thankfully we believe there is a second age that each Sunday we profess to hope and trust in when we say:

***I look forward to the Resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come, Amen!***

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<sup>6</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition\*](#). (1993). (Ps 17:8). Washington, DC: National Council of Churches of Christ.

<sup>7</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition\*](#). (1993). (Ps 17:15). Washington, DC: National Council of Churches of Christ.

<sup>8</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition\*](#). (1993). (Lk 20:34–36). Washington, DC: National Council of Churches of Christ.