

23 November 2024 - Saturday of the 33rd even-numbered week

[Rev 11, 4-12; Lk 20, 27-40](#)

Homily

Dear brothers and sisters,

When we try to imagine what life will be like after our physical death, we can only do so by using images that correspond to our life here on earth. And that's what Scripture does, in both the Old and New Testaments. It is even what Jesus does, in his parables, where he describes either eternal happiness with God, or eternal misfortune if we have not lived in love here on earth.

Obviously, we can only imagine the afterlife using images. And the only images we have are those that correspond to our senses: what we can see, hear, touch and smell. There's nothing wrong with using all the images we have to picture life in the afterlife. But the important thing is not to forget that reality is quite different and infinitely more beautiful than anything we can express through these images.

At the time of Jesus, there were two main schools of thought among the teachers in Israel: the Pharisees, who believed in the resurrection of the dead, that is to say, in a life in the afterlife, after our physical death, and the Sadducees, who did not. It was the Sadducees who, in the Gospel text we have just read, tried to entrap Jesus by imagining a rather improbable story about a woman who had seven husbands one after the other, and the Sadducees asked Jesus whose wife she would be in heaven.

Jesus' reply was that they had understood nothing. They imagine life in the hereafter as a continuation of physical life here below. It will be quite different. Here below, our life is subject to the limits of time and place. We always live in a specific time and place. God, whose existence we will share, is beyond these limits. Our relationship with God consists entirely in being a relationship - a relationship of love. Jesus quotes a word addressed to Moses, in which God presents himself to him as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. They did not live at the same time. If God is - and not was - the God of each of them, it's because they are all still alive, even after the few years they lived on earth. He is not the God of the dead. He is the God of the living. If he is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, then he is also, and always will be, the God of each and every one of us.

And this should make us aware of something similar with regard to all

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the truths of faith. God is greater - infinitely greater than anything we can say, think or feel about Him. All the images and formulas we use to talk about God and divine things, including the most important dogmatic definitions, are only weak approximations to a Reality infinitely greater and more beautiful than anything we can say or think about it. This should make us very humble with regard to all our knowledge and experience of divine things, and make us understanding with regard to other people who may express the same realities in formulas quite different from our own, even if they seem logically contradictory to us. The only thing that matters, in the end, is our relationship with God, a relationship that is love - the only form of true knowledge of God.

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