



Homily for
THE THIRTY-SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
5/6 November, 2016

Fr. Dwayne's homily follows...

32nd Sunday – C – 2016 November 6, 2016 Holy Spirit (HG)

II Maccabees 7:1-2, 9-14 II Th 2:16-3:5 Lk 20:27-38

I. In the bulletin this week is an insert listing our deceased parishioners from this past year: from about the end of October last year until the end of October this year. Nearly all of their funerals were in the parish; there are 91 listed.

When I meet with families and ruminate on a funeral homily, the central question is my mind is: what are examples of how this person lived as a disciple of Jesus? How did this person witness to Christ?

For each of us – in our own way – is called to witness to Christ. II. The seven brothers – in the first reading - were witnesses – to their Jewish

faith. The word “martyr” means “witness” and the seven brothers give the supreme witness by dying for their faith.

What do they witness to? They witness to their belief that God will be faithful to them even after death. For this reason they are willing to die for the sake of observing the laws of their religion. If they do so, they believed God would be faithful to them for their fidelity to the covenant by giving them the blessing of a resurrected life with God.

Belief in a resurrection came late to Judaism – only within the last two centuries before Christ. Until that time, the only thing that happened when you died is that you went to the grave and you lived on in your children and in your

name. Belief in the resurrection has its roots in the Maccabean revolt of 165 when there were many Jewish martyrs. The question arose – how can God be a God of justice if these good people died for the tenants of their faith? How does God deal justly with those who died in his name?

Thus was born belief in the resurrection. III. At the time of Christ, the Sadducees resisted belief in a resurrected life. They were

the party that ran the Temple and the Jewish institutions. They were comfortable living with excess. They had no time for the earlier Jewish martyrs who died for their faith – because this is something they would never do.

So they pose to Jesus this ridiculous example of the seven brothers who each married the same widow. Their example shows they still believe in the old idea of the deceased living on in their family and in their name.

Jesus is having this debate with them in the last week of his life. He will soon give witness to this belief by his own death and resurrection. And he challenges the Sadducees to see things differently when he refers back to Moses who encountered the God of the living in the burning bush.

IV. This belief in the resurrection continues with us, of course. When it came time to find a replacement for Judas among the disciples the apostles set the criteria – it should be someone who was with them from the very beginning up until the time Jesus was taken up, so that – *that person could be a witness to the resurrection of Jesus*. This is crucial: to be a witness to the resurrection of Jesus.

In other words – what they are saying is that this is what the Church does: give witness to the resurrection.

We are a Church of life – standing up for life – defending the defenseless in all stages of human life from conception until natural death. This includes protecting the weak and vulnerable, working to ensure everyone's basic rights are protected. This commitment is a natural consequence of following the gospel: giving witness to life.

V. I am very proud of how we at Holy Spirit Parish have observed the Year of Mercy. We have had a parish project for each of the Corporal Works of Mercy and you have enthusiastically supported these efforts by your involvement. We have given drink to the thirsty, fed the hungry, visited the imprisoned and

reached out to the sick. We have worked to clothe the naked, shelter the homeless and, most recently,

practice the corporal work of mercy to bury the dead. But I hope this is only just a tiny effort – just the tip of the iceberg – as we

continue to practice these works of mercy and find new ways to do so throughout our entire lives.

In these ways we give witness to life. VI. The Church liturgy, in these final weeks of the liturgical year and on into Advent,

moves us in the direction of thinking about the end times – our own transition from this life to the next – and thus is challenging us to reflect more deeply upon how

we specifically give witness to life. Chances are, we will not witness, become martyrs, by dying for our faith. But we do witness. We witness every day by our words and deeds. By the very specific and definite ways we do *in fact* feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, visit the sick and dying, protect the defenseless and vulnerable. The spiritual and corporal works of mercy are tools we can use to give witness to life.

So, as our friends and loved ones think about us when we've passed, what will be the witness to life they identify in us?