



**Thirty second Sunday Ordinary Time**

**2 Maccabees 7:1-2, 9-14 2 Thess. 2:16- 3:5 Luke 20: 27-38**

If ever there was a story in which we can imagine Jesus laughing it is in this. The Saducees, who were a philosophical school of the aristocracy, were conservative in their beliefs. If it wasn't written in the Law (the Torah) then they wouldn't accept it. The resurrection of the dead was one theological area under dispute. They can up with this silly example to make their point.

The Saducees believed that eternal life came through having children. That is why they had the custom of a childless widow having a child to her brother-in-law so that the dead brother's line would be preserved.

Jesus showed that he followed another tradition, which believed in resurrection. Jesus used a story about Moses, from the Torah, in which God is named as the God of Abraham, of Issac and of Jacob. Jesus says that God is a God of the living. He does qualify his statement by saying that the life we have in God is different from what we could call earthly life.

Paul puts the difference well when he chooses an example from gardening. When you plant a seed what comes up is very different from the seed. So different, that if you didn't recognise the seed you would have no idea what would break through the ground. So when we are "planted" we have no idea what the transformation will be like. As with the plant there is both continuation and difference. This is only a comparison but images are all we have. The reality is beyond our comprehension.

The story from the Maccabees comes from a period about two hundred years before Jesus' time. The mother and sons are being tortured by their enemies. They bear witness to a belief that will see them reunited beyond suffering.

In this story the mother is like God. She not only remains with her children but brings them the comfort of her strength while her own heart is breaking. As she gave of herself during the pregnancy and beyond birth so she dies a little as she enters into their death.

The presence of God with us in death is expressed also in the image of Mary standing at the Cross. The comfort she brings by her presence and prayer evoke the comfort of breast and knee.

November, the traditional time to remember the dead, is a legacy of the northern hemisphere when winter is signified by shorter days and longer nights. In a seemingly sympathetic world memories of the dead were recalled, cemeteries tidied and prayers offered. Maybe the symbolism of the southern hemisphere is more positive. As we move into longer days surrounded by explosions of new life our season is full of hope. We see darkness overcome and new life celebrated.

This hope is re-echoed in the reading from Thessalonians, which is full of consolation. Paul prays that the Word will flourish in our hearts, filled as they are with the presence and power of God.