**Faith and Tradition**

All our readings today ask us to engage our passing life by keeping our Faith and Tradition handed on to us from Jesus Christ through His apostles. For us as Christians, Tradition means keeping our faith on solid grounds. Tradition means continuity of the ways that have been laid out for us. It is the only way that will get us to heaven. Faith means not pandering to the whim of the world, but walking on the straight and narrow path, even when our hearts are troubled.

Faith is central to our salvation. As it is said in the Book of the Hebrews, **“****Faith is the realization of what is hoped for and evidence of things not seen”** (11:1). As Christians, we believe and know Jesus was resurrected. This leads us to believe in our own resurrection as promised by Jesus. It is our faith that we too will be resurrected to life body and soul at the end of time.

In our first reading, we found in the book of Maccabees the story of seven brothers who willingly gave up their lives because of their faith in God and His promises. Without flinching, they went through slow torture until death. They would not give up their faith and their Tradition of keeping God’s laws.

The questions we should ask ourselves is, in the face of trial and tribulations, is my faith strong enough to keep me fixed on the Traditions passed on by Jesus to His apostles who passed them on to us? Am I willing to lay down my life for the sake of the Gospel? Do I practice the faith that I profess?

Though we do not have it in our readings, the mother of the seven young men was even braver than her children. She had to watch and encourage her children especially the youngest child to lay down their lives for their faith and the traditions passed on to them. In the end, she too met the same faith as her children.

Our take from this story is to always be ready to defend our faith as received from God. No matter what pain, suffering, trials, and tribulations we might have to go through in this life. Our focus should always be towards our goal to spend eternity with God in heaven.

In our second reading, St. Paul tells us that God has given us an **“everlasting encouragement”** because of our faith in Christ. Jesus’ resurrection has assured us that we will have a life that is everlasting, which means, an unending life if we have faith in Him.

Paul told the Thessalonians, they should continue to do what had been handed on to them and they themselves must continue to hand it on to others means, they ought to keep Tradition alive. He also charged them to hold on to what instruction they were given. And they should be prepared to endure any trial and tribulation that might come their way. Trials that might be similar to Christ laying down His life.

In our Gospel reading, the Sadducees who did not believe in many things came with a convoluted story to try to trick Jesus. They did not believe in ***angels****,* ***spirits*** and ***resurrection.*** *They* believed only in what was written down in the *Torah*; the first five books of the Bible. They are more like our present day Protestant brothers and sisters in their beliefs of “*sola scriptura”* “*Scripture only*.” The Sadducees totally rejected the oral *Torah* or Tradition held by the Pharisees. To the Sadducees, since there is no mention of resurrection in the *Torah,* they would not believe in the resurrection of the dead.

By saying, those who are immortal do not need to marry and propagate life in heaven as mortal beings need to do for continuation of life on earth, Jesus gave them a lesson on facts of life about marriage and sex that sex belong only in marriage.

Jesus also taught them another lesson by telling them that those who are worthy of the age to come are immortal and are like angels. Jesus let them know that angels do exist. That would be shocking to the Sadducees who did not believe in angels.

Finally, Jesus used the Torah that the Sadducees believed in against them. Jesus said that Moses himself proves there is resurrection when as told by God, he describes the Lord as **“God of Abraham, God of Isaac, and God of Jacob”** (Exodus 3:16). The three had died long before the time of Moses.

Since only the living can have a God, and God claims to be the God of the patriarchs, God somehow sustains the three in life in the “Age to come,” (just as He would sustain all those who love Him). This implies, the patriarchs did not disappear into nothingness, they are alive for eternity in heaven.

What we can learn from our readings today is that God created us for a life of eternity. It is a life much more wonderful and beyond our wildest imagination. It is a life that cannot be compared to anything on earth. These great news should warm our hearts and help us to endure whatever trial and tribulation might come our way with unwavering faith in God.

As we come to receive Jesus in the Eucharist, let us ask for enough faith so we can keep the Traditions passed on to us. And in the end, we would join Him body and soul in paradise.