

Belief in the Resurrection

By: Fr. Munachi E. Ezeopu, CSSP

A certain foreign missionary in an Africa village was charged with translating the New Testament into the local language. In his good will, this missionary saw this as an opportunity to modernize the New Testament so as not to pass over to the Africans what he saw as the “antiquated and superstitious” world-view of the bible. So he decided to remove from the translation every reference to spiritual beings other than God and the Holy Spirit. Evil spirits and angels, he argued, made no sense in the civilized world of today. An African priest working with him tried to convince him that the spiritual is part and parcel of both the biblical and African world-views and should therefore not be thrown out, but he would not listen to him. One day this missionary went to his favorite Christian community for Sunday service and right there before his very eyes, one of his “best” converts in the community began to act funny. She began swaying uncontrollably to the rhythm of the drums and stopped only when the music stopped. The young woman was visibly embarrassed with this development as she struggled in vain to keep herself from swaying. Everybody in the congregation understood this behavior to be the first signs of spirit possession.

After the service, the people brought the young woman to the priest and said, “Father, what do we do?” The priest, who was in a state of shock himself, reached into his pockets and found aspirin tablets. “Give this to her,” he said, “and let me know how she feels after some days.” He came back to the mission house and literally fell sick and was unable to eat as he tried to digest the experience. Of course he knew they would bring her back to him in a worse state after a few days. Scales fell from his eyes as the zealous crusader who wanted to convert Africans from “superstitious belief” realized that it was probably he more than they who needed a conversion.

Like the missionary, many people today think that being a modern Christian includes jettisoning the belief in spiritual beings. But what people like this do not realize is that this is not a modern thing at all. Even at the time of Jesus there were people who did not believe in spirits, in angels and in the resurrection of the dead. There people who subscribed to a certain religious and political

ideology were known as the Sadducees. In today’s gospel, some Sadducees came to Jesus and wanted to prove to him how absurd it is for any reasonable person to believe in the resurrection. They came up with the story of seven brothers who were all in turn married to the same woman and asked Jesus, “**In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife will the woman be? For the seven had married her**” (Luke 20:33). Jesus replied that it was impossible to understand the life of the resurrection in terms of the standards of the present life since in the life to come there would be no need for anyone to marry, to start with.

Notice that the problem of the Sadducees has to do with *how* things are in the resurrection life whereas Jesus’ response has to do with the *why* of the resurrection. There is a resurrection because God is God of the living. God has created us for life and not for ultimate extinction. God does not blow us into life like bubbles, here today, gone tomorrow. No God gifts us with life even after this earthly existence is over.

If there is one belief that the men and women of our world need today it is the belief in the resurrection. Why? Because it is the effective antidote to the infectious disease of materialism. The story is told of an American tourist who paid the 19th century Polish rabbi Hofetz Chaim a visit. Astonished to see that the rabbi’s home was only a simple room filled with books, a table and a bench, the tourist asked, “Rabbi, where is your furniture?” “Where is yours?” replied the rabbi. “Mine?” asked the puzzled tourist. “But I’m only a visitor here. I’m only passing through.” “So am I,” said Hofetz Chaim.

Let us thank God today for revealing to us the mystery of the resurrection. Let us reaffirm our belief in the life of the world to come, since this is the most effective means to escape the stranglehold of materialism in our lives here on earth. Do we understand exactly how it will be in the life of the resurrection. Certainly, not. For we are talking about “**what no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him**” (1 Corinthians 2:9)

READINGS OF THE WEEK

2 Maccabees 7:1-14

2 Thessalonians 2:16-3:5

Luke 20:27-38

November 10, 2013

靈 修 生 活

常 年 期 第 卅 二 主 日

林 思 川 神 父

經文脈絡：路加福音結束耶穌的「旅程報導」之後，敘述耶穌榮進耶路撒冷，以及耶穌生命中最後幾天在聖城中所發生的事件。路二十 1-二一 4 記載耶穌在聖殿的教導，路加把這些內容安排於此，一方面使人明白為甚麼猶太領袖決議殺害耶穌，另一方面也使外邦基督徒讀者相信耶穌是默西亞。這個主日的福音選自於這段「聖殿教導」，耶穌面對撒杜塞人挑戰「復活」信仰而提出教導(路二十 27-28)。整段文的結構非常簡單，先是撒杜塞人提出問題，接著是耶穌的反駁與教導。

撒杜塞人：耶穌在公開生活中遭遇到各種不同的敵人與挑戰，但在路加福音中撒杜塞人成為耶穌的對手唯有這一次。福音說他們「否認復活」，正是他們這個黨派的特色，不論新約聖經(宗四 1-2；廿三 6-8) 或聖經以外的作品都證實這一點。撒杜塞人大多屬於地位較高、生活富裕的司祭階層；在聖殿毀滅之後(AD70)，這個族群也消失無蹤。他們不僅否認死人復活，也不相信天使和其他精神體的存在，最重要的原因是他們只承認「梅瑟五書」的權威性，並且認為這些書從未提及這些事。

挑戰：來到耶穌前的撒杜塞人稱耶穌為「師傅」，然而他們所提出的問題卻充滿挑釁的意味，顯示他們對耶穌的稱呼是一種尖酸刻薄的嘲諷。他們認為，耶穌教導講述有關復活的道理，顯示祂根本不認識梅瑟法律。

代兄弟立嗣：撒杜塞人向耶穌提出的難題，主要依據古代近東地區流傳非常廣泛的「代兄弟立嗣」的法律(申二五 5-6)，這個法律的主要目的在於確保一個宗族的香火能夠延續不斷(創三八 8)。

撒杜塞人對復活的看法：撒杜塞人根據「代兄弟立嗣」的法律擬定的一個極端情況：「七個兄弟都娶過同一位妻子，那麼在復活的時候，這婦人要作哪一個的妻子呢？」他們企圖藉着這個「個案」，證明死人復活不僅和這條法律彼此矛盾，根本就是荒謬可笑的妄想。這個假設的問題透顯出他們對復活的_{理解}：復活基本上只是現世存在方式的延續，包含婚姻生活與生產。這也是當時的撒杜塞人對於復活的瞭解。

復活的生命：耶穌以雙重的論證回答他們。首先說明「現世」的生命和「復活」後的生命完全不同：生活在這個世上的人需要嫁娶，為了要確保生命的延續；但對那些「有資格經由復活參與來世生命的人」而言，這一切都是毫無必要的。因為他們已不再處於死亡的法律之下，他們就像天使一般，死亡再也不能威脅他們，因為他們已成為「復活了的天主兒女」，經由復活他們得以完全地親近天主，真實地屬於天主的家庭，分享基督天主子的名份(羅八 29)。

天主是活人的天主：耶穌的第二個論證採取「以其人之道還治其人之身」的策略。因為撒杜塞人將梅瑟當作絕對的權威，所以耶穌將祂的論證建基於梅瑟書中的教導。出谷紀記載「上主是亞巴郎的天主、依撒格的天主和雅格的天主」(出三 6-15)，傳統上猶太人根據這經文相信，雅威自己說過，以色列的祖先都和祂生活在一起。路十三 28 和十六 22-31 都理所當然地預設了這一點，而早期猶太作品也都證實這種看法。

團體性和個人性的復活：除此之外，耶穌的話中還附加了一個理由：「在天主眼中，所有的人都是活著的。」這句話出自於瑪加伯四書(這是猶太文學作品，屬於東正教的聖經正典)，敘述面臨迫害的殉道者說出這句話，他們相信人的不死性，因為他們的祖先都和天主生活在一起，因此他們也勇於慷慨為信仰犧牲。這句話說明以色列所有的祖先以及一切有資格得到復活的人，都和天主一起生活。這句話也顯示猶太人的傳統相信「復活」就等於「永生」；雖然在世界末日一切人都要復活，但在此之前，所有的亡者也已經以個人的方式開始享受永遠的生命。路加在結束這段報導時指出，當時有些在場的經師稱讚說：「師傅，你說的好。」從此，他們再不敢質問什麼了(路加二十 39-40)。這個結束語顯示耶穌絕對地凌駕於對手之上，這個故事終止了福音中一切爭辯性的談話。

綜合反省：路加編輯報導這段經文，所關心的不僅是耶穌自己宣講時曾碰到的挑戰，而是同時幫助初期教會面對他們遭遇的重大困難。撒杜塞人所提出的問題，反映了初期基督徒常常面臨的挑戰與質疑(宗四 2；十七 32)，因此這個故事也是辯護基督喜訊最佳的榜樣。天主是「活人」的天主，對天主而言，「死人」根本不存在；「死」於罪惡中的人，也是「活」著接受罪罰。耶穌的死亡與復活給人類帶來永生的救恩，今世的人死亡後，便立刻開始分享與天主共融的生命，這種圓滿共融將在世界末日人子再來之時達到圓滿。

摘自「教友生活周刊」

二 零 一 三 年 十 一 月 十 日

本 週 讀 經

加下 7:1-14；得後 2:16-3:5；路 20:27-38