

Thirty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time
November 9-10, 2019

All Saints Parish, Syracuse, NY
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I have always been intrigued by this Gospel and that poor woman who had no control over her fate after the death of her husband. Since she had no heir the law mandated that she marry a member of his family - which proved to be his 6 brothers. Obviously they were not very healthy! The Sadducees did not accept resurrection from the dead as the Pharisees did, so they attempted to trap Jesus by asking Jesus whose wife would she be in the resurrection? The problem with this question was that they were asking who would own her in heaven and Jesus tells them it's not like that in heaven. At one's own personal resurrection, we become fully alive, fully perfected. We will not belong to one another because the love we will experience is not exclusive for we will be able to love everyone with God's own love. It is a love for all without exception – for God is a God not of the dead but of the living.

Barbara Brown Taylor, an author, professor and Episcopalian priest in her book, *HOME BY ANOTHER WAY*, had this to say on the subject of resurrection. She writes “what you will find about the resurrection is that Jesus surrendered his life so that when he appeared to the disciples he was the same, but he was different, and because he was both, our futures may turn out as astounding as his.” Can you imagine? That's quite a wonderful thought! As we know, no one has come back to tell us exactly what heaven is like because resurrection can't be supported by reason anymore than it can be experienced on this earth. We have only the scripture stories and the choice of whether to believe them or not. In John's Gospel, he quotes Jesus as saying, “I am the Resurrection and the Life, those who believe in me will never die.” (John 11:25)

Sister Joan Chittister in her book, *IN SEARCH OF BELIEF*, 20 years ago, found in one engine search alone on the subject of “Heaven” 323,751 articles! Don't worry, I'm not going to go through them! I would like to briefly sum up what S. Joan had to write about this subject. She writes how our notion of heaven pretty much stays with what we learned as children. So S. Joan in her book tells how Heaven, the Christian tradition explains, is a state of perfect union with God. It's the end of a relationship with God begun in life and consummated in a way we do not know. Heaven is union with God, the Source of Life and this is a belief in many major religions throughout the world. Didn't Jesus say believe in me and you will never die...meaning we will have eternal life! I've always been struck by the fact that all of us here present didn't have to be given the gift of life. We were created to have fullness of life with God for all eternity, that's why God created us... and to me that's the definition of resurrection. Sister Joan goes on to say how we search for God without ceasing “in the great, grand miracles of human goodness” and, I might add, in the little gestures of one another where we see the face of God. Jesus came to bring us LIFE and invites us to live it to the fullest!

In S. Joan's *Vision and Viewpoint Notes* she writes of how when we leave this earth, what will we be leaving behind? As I read through her notes I thought of how our journey to heaven is reflected right now on how we live each day. We will leave behind our attitude toward the world...how we cared for the earth...what we thought of people of other colors and creeds...how we connected with and treated those around us – family, friends, work world...and the list goes on. So heaven is begun here and now – it is not a place! The Carmelite Nun, Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity wrote “I feel I have found heaven on earth, because heaven is God, and God lives in my soul.”

In light of what I've shared with you so briefly in my reflection on heaven, I'd like to end with a parable that will need no further explanation about the question that we all ponder throughout our life time. It was written by an unknown author and titled:

The Parable of the Twins

“Once twins were conceived. Weeks passed and they developed. As they grew, they sang for joy, “Isn't it great to be alive!”

Together the twins explored the womb. When they found their mother's life cord, they shouted for joy. “How great is our mother's love that she shared her very life with us.” As weeks passed, the twins began to change. “What does this mean?” said the one. “It means that our life in the womb is coming to an end.” said the second. “But I don't want to leave the womb, I want to stay here forever,” said the first. “We have no choice” said the second. Besides, maybe there is life after birth.” “How can that be?” said the first. “We will shed our mother's cord, and how is life possible without it? Besides, there is evidence that there were others in the womb before us, and none of them has ever come back to tell us there is life after birth? No, this is the end.” And so the first twin fell into despair, saying, “If life in the womb ends in death, what's its purpose? It's meaningless! Maybe we don't even have a mother. Maybe we made her up.” “But we must have a mother” said the second. “How else did we get here? How else do we stay alive?”

And so the last days in the womb were filled with deep questioning and fear.

Finally, the moment of birth arrived. When the twins opened their eyes, they cried for joy. For what they saw exceeded their wildest dreams...as they saw the face of their loving mother.

What no one ever saw or heard,
what no one ever thought could happen,
is the very thing
God prepares for those who love God.” (1Cor. 2:9)

Amen!