

CHS JMJ Fr. John's Homily for the 32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time.  
The Courage of our Convictions

Not the most interesting or appealing set of readings for us to preach on this weekend. And the one from Maccabees, about the seven brothers, is actually pretty disturbing. Nevertheless, it does teach us a lesson about the courage of our convictions and following our conscience in the face of opposition. So we can come back to that a little bit later.

But let's start with the Gospel. The first thing we should note is that the Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection. Remember when I commented a few weeks ago how difficult it is to find two people to agree on anything? Well, despite being among the religious leaders, the Sadducees disagreed with the Pharisees on some basic teachings about God. No resurrection, of course, meant no life after death. We go into the grave and that's it. No heaven or hell or purgatory. Therefore, "*not to worry*" because there is no cause for concern about punishment, or even reward.

But, it's apparent from the beginning that this is just another example of the authorities putting Jesus to the test. Despite their not believing in the Resurrection of the body, they ask him a question specifically about that very subject.

*The Law of Moses*, they pointed out, said that if a man dies without any offspring, his brother should marry the wife to carry on the family name. But they take the scenario to absurd levels. What if seven brothers marry the widow? Whose wife will she be? Of course Jesus is too smart for them. He advises them on the truth of the matter about the afterlife, and they were left speechless.

I think I mentioned to you that one scene from the trailer for season 3 of *The Chosen*. It proposes a fictional response that Jesus gave to a religious leader. It was probably a Pharisee but it certainly could have been a Sadducee as well. When that rabbi warned Jesus about his teaching, and if he didn't retract his statements, he said that *they would have no recourse but to resort to the Law of Moses*. To which Jesus replied, "I Am, the Law of Moses." WHOH!

That certainly shocked the accusers, but at the same time increased their resolve to bring him to justice. And we know how that turned out.

Again, Jesus never said those words, but he did say something very similar to it. His response in Matthew's gospel was that "I have not come to destroy the law, I have come to fulfill it." So Jesus is, indeed, claiming to be the one spoken of in the *Law of Moses* as *The One Who is Coming Into the World*.

But as for the point made to the Sadducees, Jesus said that in Heaven there would be no marriage. At death we will enter into another world. The world of Eternal life. He silences them rather quickly and they walked away. And the following verse says that

certain of the Pharisees were pleased with Jesus' answer, because it agreed with their way of thinking. At least this time.

OK, back to the first reading from Maccabees. It is a disgusting scenario. The authorities pressure the seven brothers to conform to the laws of the state and break the Law of Moses and eat pork. They refuse. And each is killed. This is not unusual. It is a common situation throughout history as one entity seeks to exert power over another.

In the early years of Christianity, we had several generations of martyrs who did exactly the same thing as the Maccabees. All they had to do was “pinch a little incense” to Caesar to indicate their loyalty to him as their God. Most of them refused and paid the price. But they gave us such a great witness of courage, in the following of their conscience.

And this is also true of many of the saints, big names and small names right up to the very present. And we honored all of them this past Monday on *All Saints Day*. Yes, many of them endured the red martyrdom. The shedding of their blood. But there are a lot of white martyrs out there as well, and I believe that there will be more opportunities for that type of martyrdom in the days, weeks, months and years ahead.

Let me give me some examples of modern day suffering. Deacon Jerry has told a story of a man from Austria in the years leading up to World War II. His story was made famous in the movie called *A Hidden Life*. A farmer, high up in the Austrian Alps, Franz Jagerstatter, was a husband, a father and a conscientious objector who refused to enter into the service of Adolf Hitler and his Nazi regime. He followed his conscience. Ultimately he was executed because of his lack of cooperation with the authorities. His cause is up for sainthood.

But, we have heard from The Bible, prophecies about a day to come, when mother will be against daughter and daughter against mother. Father against son and son against father. Well who could deny that these are those days.

I hear very few examples of moms and dads disowning their children. But I am certainly seeing a lot of examples of sons and daughters disowning their parents. They threaten them in some very interesting and imaginative ways. Mom and dad, if you don't think like we think, and if you don't vote like we vote, well, we're outta here. And we're taking your grandchildren with us. Sound familiar?

We here at Holy Spirit have a special ministry to those who suffer from SSA, same-sex attractions., Homosexuality. The ministry is called *Courage* and *Encourage*. *Courage* is for those who, despite their strong attractions, have made a decision to follow Church teaching and lead a life of chastity. We've had very few people join this ministry.

*Encourage*, on the other hand, are the families and friends of those with SSA. They too want to follow Church teaching, but their children don't. They want to live the gay lifestyle and moms and dads of course are very concerned about this. Will their children

lose their salvation? When they first come to us, they are very upset. Devastated. What shall we do? So *EnCourage* serves as a support group for those parents who have just had the bombshell dropped on them. Their son or daughter has *come out of the closet* as they say.

I have certainly heard some heart wrenching stories from the parents who attend these meetings. The sons and daughters are in lock-step with the culture. And they have been instructed on how to manipulate. “*Mom, dad, if you do not attend my same-sex marriage, then you’ve seen the last of me.*” This certainly presents a big problem for parents and even friends. “How do we follow our conscience? Should we attend the wedding? How can I be faithful to my Catholic Christian faith? What does Jesus think about this?” “Speak Lord, for your servants are listening, what should we do?”

The *Courage Apostolate* has yearly conferences at various locations around the country. I have attended several over the years. They are always eye-openers as we hear very courageous Courage members tell their stories and how they have managed to keep the faith in light of their particular cross, despite that thorn in their flesh. They have one very interesting break-out session that I think they must have at every gathering. It brings *Courage* and *EnCourage* members together into the same room. Courage people on one side of the room, and EnCourage families on the opposite side. And the interesting thing is that the Courage members have come there to encourage the EnCourage members.

Those Courage members who are *fighting the good fight*, who are *running the race*, who are competing as best they can to keep the faith in light of their attractions, they cheer on the family members, telling them to remain true to their faith. Obey your conscience, and to not allow yourself to be manipulated and harassed by your sons and daughters. Yes, don’t judge them, but love them, pray for them, and sacrifice for them. But above all, remain true to yourselves, and to God.

Tuesday is *Election Day* and we have got that big vote looming on the horizon. I know that some of you have been courageous in sharing the truth about *Proposal 3* and other causes and candidates as well. And I know that some of you have suffered at the hands of others, particularly your children. But this is where the rubber meets the road.

Let’s continue to pray, particularly that Rosary. On Tuesday we will have a special Mass here in the morning followed by a Day of Adoration leading up to an evening Mass followed by a healing service. Please come in at some point during that day to plead for mercy for your family and friends, your brothers and sisters in the faith, and your fellow citizens of America, and our State. Lord, have mercy on Michigan. Mary, mother of mercy, pray for us.

~Fr. John