

32nd Sunday of Ordinary Time (C)
November 7, 2010

What's our image of heaven?

We confess our belief and hope in heaven every time we pray the creed: "we look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come."

But, what does this mean?

Have we ever stopped and asked ourselves what this means and what exactly we believe and hope in?

We can answer this question a number of ways...but, let's start by exploring what we reject as false doctrine / belief.

The Sadducees did not believe in a resurrection of the body or in angels or in the existence of the soul.

Well, this doesn't fit with what we believe, does it?

The Levirate Law – which the Sadducees followed – also said there's no resurrection and because there's no resurrection, a person lives on through his/her children. So, if a person does not bear children that person's memory and life die with the person... death really is the end of the story for those who followed the Levirate Law. How sad is that?

We, people of faith, reject this too as that which we don't believe.

Let's fast forward now to how some people in our own time and culture think of heaven.

When asked: "What's heaven like," these familiar and known people had this to say:

Britney Spears – Heaven is peaceful and happy where people hop around from cloud to cloud and an old man with a long white beard wanders around...that's God.

Oprah Winfrey – Heaven is sharing a great big baked potato with your best friend.

Bishop Andrew of Ireland – To know what heaven is like...die.

And he's right...in order to truly experience heaven and know what it's like, we must die.

Until then, we can't completely / fully know what heaven will be like.

However, we are not left completely in the dark.

Our Tradition does tell us a bit of what heaven will be like.

For starters, we know and believe we will be completely one with God and we will want nothing else because in Him we will be fulfilled.

We know and believe that at death, our soul is separated from our body...but this is temporary and was not part of God's plan from the beginning.

Rather, God's plan was unity and this is achieved in heaven.

In heaven, our souls and bodies are reunited and our bodies are glorified. What this exactly looks like, we don't know. All we are told about this is that: "what we shall be has not yet been revealed," but we do know and believe we will be like God.

So, we are called to believe – to have faith – that there will indeed be a resurrection of the dead.

That our souls will be united with our bodies – not as we understand them now, but as God created and intended them to be from the beginning – complete, fulfilled, whole.

And that life does not end with death; but rather, life is supernaturally changed forever.

How fortunate and lucky are we to have a God who cares about us so much as to do all this for us!

Even if we don't completely understand all this now, it should at least provide with comfort knowing that in the end, we won't have to worry about anything because God will take care of us.

And God will take care of us.

As St. Josemaria Escriva said, "We belong to God completely, soul and body, flesh and bones, all our senses and faculties" – in other words, we are God's possessions and we know and believe that God doesn't own junk...but only the most valuable of treasures.

And so, even though we may not be able to know exactly what heaven will be like, hopefully we are taking comfort in knowing that it does exist and it exists for us when our bodies will be resurrected to be united with our souls.

May our lives reflect this knowledge and belief in that we pray, hope, and trust that when our time comes, God may indeed claim us for Himself and raise us up to eternal bliss.