

I know that it is hard to believe with the current temperatures but we are in the season of Fall. The give away is the orange and yellow leaves falling from the trees. These colors are the precursors of the gray of winter. The Solemnity of Christ the King is only two weeks away and that will mark the end of the church year. Just as the glory of the leaves leads to the gray of winter, the glory of Christ the King will lead us to ponder another gray: human death. But we do not stay in the cold of death because with eyes of faith we look past the grayness of death in order to see the promise of heaven.

In our readings today we see a disagreement amongst the Jews of Jesus time about death. When people think of the Jews of the 1st century, they mistakenly think that they all believed the same things. Not true. We must understand that Judaism of Jesus' time was divided on what they believed. One of the biggest divisions was between the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The Pharisees believed in life after death; the Sadducees did not. This led to the

confrontation between the Sadducees and Jesus in our gospel today. Jesus was brilliant in his defense but this controversy should get all of us thinking: Do we believe in life after death? We should/ being that we are catholic but do we?

In the second book of Maccabees, our first reading, We encounter a mother and her seven sons being tortured in an effort to get them to renounce their faith. These event occurred 150 years before Jesus walked the earth yet the various statements of faith made by the sons indicated a belief in life after death. This verse of second Maccabees is one of the oldest statements on record of belief in life after death. Again the statements of faith by the seven sons should challenge us to ask the question in our own heart, “What do I believe?”

I think we can say with some certainty that for us here in the United States, our faith life is rarely contested like the seven sons in the first reading. Other believers in other countries are not so fortunate. Torture and death for professing one’s faith still happens. In our country people leave the faith not because of fear

of death but more a sense of apathy towards the faith. Again the question of the Sadducees is posed: Do we believe that there is life after death or do we even care?

Given our society's call to make everything easier with microwaves, and drive thrus, computers, and even self driving cars and now beer trucks, are we being convinced that we do not have to work for anything. This attitude helps people find easy excuses for not following our church's most demanding teachings. If we are concerned about our life after death we might want to start thinking about our life here including our sinfulness, our choice of lifestyles, and our responsibilities to others. Like St. Paul suggests, "Perhaps we should pray that we may be delivered from perverse and wicked people." If we appreciate the colors in the fall of our life we probably also want to prepare ourselves for the ensuing gray of death and the golden glow of new life that will follow.