

NOVEMBER 22 FATHER HENK VAN MEIJEL

The Gospel reading is actually quite funny to listen to. And the Sadducees, who actually came out of Greek culture... We should remember that the Jewish people, after the Babylonian exile, they were only for about 100 years on their own, and then the Greeks kind of took over. And out of that influence, the Sadducees came forward. Who, of course, they were Jewish, but they had their own belief system. They were very worldly, and so they did not believe in the resurrection.

And we also see in scripture, especially in Paul, how Paul dealt with them—between the opposition between the Sadducees and the Pharisees. But here the Sadducees are testing Jesus. And Jesus gives the right answer: Whose wife will—or sorry, whose husband will the seven brothers be to the wife who was childless? And Jesus says, “Well, you silly people, in heaven there is no marriage.” And because heaven is beyond us. It's beyond our understanding, and we will get a glimpse of it once in a while, but do we know what heaven really looks like? No. All I know, it is good. And not to be afraid of dying. And so, heaven is good.

And today's saint, Saint Cecilia, also knew that. We don't have to be afraid of dying. There is life after death; it will continue. And actually, it's interesting that after Jesus explains this, how some of the Pharisees said, “You're right. You answered well.” So, they were sitting on the fence, so to speak. But there is life after death, and, like I said, Saint Cecilia of Rome very much knew that.

Saint Cecilia, who's actually also mentioned in Eucharistic Prayer 1 under the commemoration of the dead, she must have made a

great—she must have been a great example of Christian martyrdom. We actually, historically, we do not know much about Saint Cecilia. But there's of course many, many myths. And somehow she became the patroness of musicians somewhere in the Middle Ages. But she made a great impression because she was the daughter of a very wealthy and powerful Roman family. Very rich. And to have someone who's born with a golden spoon in their mouth, so to speak, and who had everything, to give up their life just like that, and to face martyrdom as a young lady who was just married—a young bride to Valerian, her husband.

They took a vow to not to consummate the marriage, to live as husband—sorry, as sister and brother. But there's not much historical proof, as I said. But they knew—they knew much more of what was happening. And so often, I've come across people who are scared to die. Well, there's nothing to be scared of. Life will change; life will go on. All that God asks of us is just to trust. To trust everything will be okay. And so, not to be afraid.

In today's first reading of 1 Maccabees, we have King Antiochus IV, who's laying in bed, and he's all disappointed—just like a little child, with his thumb in his mouth, probably—and all disappointed. And he understood that he was the cause of his own problems. That he was the one who imposed Greek religion on the Jewish community. Before that, although Greek influence, but the Greeks did kind of let everyone honour their own gods. And he left it alone, but Antiochus imposed that, and that's why the Maccabean Revolt. And people were pretty angry, and the Maccabeans of course overran his army.

And so we have King Antiochus laying in bed there, and all disappointed that everything went wrong. And he is really—it's kind of interesting when I read this, or I have to laugh with it, because we, as children, learn already how we deal with disappointments. And he probably learned also—he was born with a golden spoon in his mouth, and he probably learned to be like a five-year-old, and just to curl up and be all disappointed, and how things went wrong for him.

We often—everyone has different ways of dealing with stress. And we look at our own selves, how we deal with stress. Some people, like Antiochus, he just curls up in bed: (mocking voice) “And nobody loves me anymore, and everything went wrong...” And he goes in depression. Other people, who learned—who were living in a house where there was a lot of anger, they're just like their parents, and lash out in anger. Some other people, they just be quiet, they learn to be quiet, and to just absorb it, and bring it to God.

And so it is interesting stuff to pray with: How am I also dealing with my own anger and disappointments? Am I dealing with it in a healthy way? Am I a person of God, who always understands that God will bring good or the bad? Or am I from the world, and I cannot see any further than what I visually see in the world?

Amen.