

## 32<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

November 6, 2022

Reflection by Sister Susan Quaintance, OSB

2 Mc 7:1-2, 9-14; 2 Thes 2:16-3:5; Lk 20:27-38

Are you brave? “Brave” has never been a word I have used to describe myself. As I look back, I can identify a few instances when I felt like I summoned up some courage; I didn’t really have much choice. I’m sure you can summon up some, too; life demands it. This current moment – for some personally, and for all, communally, and perhaps nationally – seems to be one of those. Pondering that quality is definitely something that today’s gospel prompted in me, and perhaps gave some clues as to how to meet a moment that requires fortitude and stout-heartedness.

You might be thinking, “Hello, Sister Susan, don’t you want to talk about the first reading? That’s the one that really talks about courage.” And while it’s a good story for the strong of stomach (someday check out the verses omitted from today’s lectionary portion), it is unlikely that I will ever be in the circumstances of that poor mother and her seven sons. Which is really good because I wouldn’t hold up well under torture!

Rather, what I tried to wrestle with were the situations of Jesus in Luke’s gospel, and the gospel writer himself.

In the story that we hear today, Jesus is in Jerusalem, on the cusp of his passion. In between his dinner with Zaccheus, that we heard last week, and today, Palm Sunday happened. He has entered Jerusalem amid crowds proclaiming, “Hosanna.” He has wept for what he sees in the city and thrown the money-changers out of the Temple. He’s also told a couple of stories which make clear his allegiance to a new kind of law. It’s no wonder, then, that the Sadducees set out to trick him with this story about a different set of seven brothers and another poor woman who kept getting passed on in an attempt to keep the family line going. Here in Chapter 20, Jesus is courageous in his response, but it is nothing compared to what will be required of him, beginning in Chapter 22.

I also thought about Luke. This question about resurrection appears in all three synoptic gospels. When that happens, it’s helpful to explore what edits this author has made, what tweaks have been done to communicate something particular to his audience. Luke’s gospel, you’ll recall, was written pretty late in the first century, somewhere between 80 and 90 CE, after the Roman

destruction of the Temple. Neither Luke nor his readers knew the historical Jesus. They were trying to reckon his teachings about radical mercy and compassion to a world that was hostile to that message (and them). The changes that Luke makes to the story he would have known from Mark and Matthew are subtle but significant. I won't bore you with the details of the exact words he changes or adds, but I find that they expand the story in two ways. First, Luke articulates a clear recognition that what will be is going to be different than what is. Secondly, Luke, as he often does, preaches a message of inclusivity. God is not a "God of the dead, but of the living, for to him all are alive." That last phrase – "all are alive" – is unique to Luke. This author, too, is brave in taking Jesus's message to new places with new emphases.

I want to be brave. I want to be faithful. But in the face of so many endings, current or anticipated, it is a challenge. But God does all sorts of surprising things, even now. I was heartened by the *Oxford Biblical Commentary's* comment on Jesus's response in this gospel text. "Jesus's reply points to the newness of God's eschatological, restorative act. It is not simply the continuation of what is now." Three weeks from today Advent will begin, and we will be reminded of that promise of something new for four whole weeks. I can hang on until then.