

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

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### Lectionary 156:

2 Mc 7:1-2, 9-14 [*...but the King of the world will raise us up to live again forever.*]

Ps 17:1, 5-6, 8, 15 [*Keep me as the apple of your eye, hide me in the shadow of your wings.*]

2 Thess 2:16-3:5 [*But the Lord is faithful; he will strengthen you and guard you from the evil one.*]

Rev 1:5a, 6b [*Jesus Christ is the firstborn of the dead; to him be glory and power, forever and ever.*]

Luke 20:27-38 [*They can no longer die, for they are like angels' and they are the children of God because they are the ones who will rise.*], or

Luke 20:27, 34-38 [*...and he is not God of the dead, but of the living, for to him all are alive.*"]

### **Possible preaching themes:**

- The **everlasting life of Christ** is not to be confused with immortality.
  - From the seven tortured and killed brothers and mother in 2 Maccabees to the seven deceased brothers and interrogated widow in Luke, Jesus makes clear that human law neither stops nor defines the salvation of God.
  - The promise of resurrection means accepting the deadliness of death.
- **God's salvation does not undo death**, it transforms it.
  - In Luke, those whom God resurrects *no longer* die, they do not avoid death altogether.
  - The children of God are alive to God even when they die.

### **Possible scientific resources: Everlasting Life and Immortality**

- **Biological Immortality:** the hydrozoan [jellyfish] *Turritopsis dohrnii*
  - <https://www.pnas.org/doi/full/10.1073/pnas.2118763119>
  - [Science of the immortal jellyfish, Earth's longest living animal | BBC Science Focus Magazine](#)
- **Reversing Death:** OrganEX
  - [OrganEx Revives Pigs an Hour After Death, Holding Promise for Transplants - DNA Science \(plos.org\)](#)
  - [OrganEx may save donor organs by 'telling' cells not to die \(msn.com\)](#)

- **Xenotransplantation: Pig organs**
  - <https://www.aamc.org/news-insights/how-pig-organs-made-their-way-humans-slow-advance-transplant-kidneys-and-hearts#:~:text=During%20the%201990s%2C%20pigs%20replaced,on%20the%20recent%20xenotransplants%20there.>
  - [Xenotransplantation: Can pigs save human lives? - Science in the News \(harvard.edu\)](#)

### Homily outline:

- For some, believing in Jesus is a **ticket to living forever**.
  - The scriptures today, however, make explicit that the everlasting life of God becomes clearest when the reality of death is faced.
  - The salvation of God even emboldens people of faith to defy the overestimated power of those who rule by killing.
  - Therefore, life in Christ is not immortality or an escape from perishing.
  - It is a promise of new life in God no matter what happens.
- **Humans will do all kinds of things to keep living.**
  - The distressed Psalmist verging on paranoia cries out to God to be hidden in the shadow of the Lord's wings.
  - In our time, scientists are "personalizing" pigs to be ideal organ donors for specific recipients to prepare for xenotransplantation, or the transplantation of organs between species.
  - Pigs have organs similar in size and function to humans.
  - Scientists at Yale have even managed to revive dead organs in pigs by injecting them with a solution called OrganEx.
  - Could OrganEx help to preserve human life?
- Did you know there is **at least one species that can live forever?**
  - Miniature jellyfish known as *Turritopsis dohrnii* can restore their bodies when they are damaged indefinitely, effectively making them immortal.
  - It appears that when injured, the jellyfish activate dormant genes related to pluripotency, or a cell's ability to grow into multiple forms, to rejuvenate itself.
  - Whether the rejuvenating DNA process of the jellyfish has human application still remains a question.
  - If we're honest, many of us fear death and would like to have DNA like the *Turritopsis dohrnii*.
  - We might think of our faith as a kind of DNA we activate when our lives are threatened.
- The **Spirit of God within us given by Christ** is, however, far more profound than jellyfish DNA and infinitely more potent than OrganEx.

- It enables us to face death, even to embrace it under the most treacherous and horrific circumstances.
  - Each one of the seven brothers tortured unto death and the mother who perishes afterward in 2 Maccabees 7 draw upon inward strength given by hope in the Lord to face life-destroying evil and bear witness to the everlasting power of God.
  - The epistle and gospel readings from 2 Thessalonians and Luke reiterate the confidence available from God that God's faithfulness will enable God's children to endure all manner of evil even unto death because the life and goodness of God cannot be killed and does not end if we die.
  - The responsive reading from Revelation puts a finer point on it – Jesus Christ is firstborn of the dead; to him be glory and power, forever and ever. Alleluia, alleluia.
- **Jesus never forsakes us** and his glory and power fills and transcends our mortal lives.
    - In the promise of resurrection, the dead rise.
    - The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is a God not of the dead, but the living, for to God, all are alive.
    - May we place our fear of death in the hands of Christ, and trust as he leads us to the fullness of life, here on earth no matter what happens, and in heaven, where we can only begin to imagine our rebirth in the majesty of the divine.

**Tags:** death, everlasting life, jellyfish, medicine, organ transplant

### **About the Preaching with the Sciences Initiative**

A primary way Roman Catholics explore their faith and nourish their spirituality is by participating in Sunday Mass and actively engaging in the homily. However, few preachers explicitly connect faith or spirituality with science. The Preaching with the Sciences initiative, made possible by a generous grant from the John Templeton Foundation, gathers scientists and leading homileticians to explore the positive contributions science can make to preaching, and consequently contribute to more contemporary modes of believing. Such contributions are grounded in the rich imaginations that scientists bring to their work as well as in scientific discoveries that have a potential for revealing religious truths and even shedding new insight on ancient teachings and beliefs.

With guidance from world-renowned scientists with differing areas of expertise, a select number of homileticians will draft homily outlines for preaching key Sundays and feast days across the 3-year lectionary cycle. Over 100 homily outlines will highlight some of the way's sciences and the contemporary search for religious meaning can interface. These free homiletic resources have the potential to influence thousands of preachers seeking help each week in crafting sermons and helping to shape a scientifically informed religious imagination among future preachers.