

*All creation is called to convergence in the heart of Christ.*

## The 32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time – Cycle C

2 MC 7:1-2, 9-14, PS 17:1, 5-6, 8, 15, 2 THES 2:16-3:5, REV 1:5A, 6B



Dcn. Frank Sila  
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Good morning. Our readings today are about life after death. We first hear of seven brothers and their mother. Convinced that they will be raised up, they accept death, protesting the law of the king. In the Gospel that we just heard, Jesus is given an improbable question. Under Mosaic Law, a brother was obligated to take a deceased brother's wife, as his own. This gave the community assurance that the widow and children would be cared for. The Sadducees' question, "Whose wife will she be in heaven," was asked to challenge and undermine the teaching of life after death. Jesus affirms that heaven is for real, saying that, "Those deemed worthy will be like angels... who neither marry nor are given in marriage." *Luke 20:35*

What does it mean to be like an angel? When someone dies, will I see that person again? Will I see that person only in memory? For those 'near death' it seems as if a veil is lifted. For a moment, we see beyond our human limitations recognizing loved ones who have gone before us. The Church teaches that they are part of the Communion of Saints.

Some ten years ago, a reporter for the Philadelphia Inquirer, wrote a first novel based on several columns that he had written about the misadventures of his Golden Lab. John Grogan's book, "Marley & Me" is about Marley's hyper antics, it is also a story about family. It begins with John's marriage to the love of his life, Jenny. Jenny is responsible and knows how things are to play out. She has a five-year plan that reads like, land career jobs, buy house, have children, grow old and, well, you get the idea. John gives Jen a plant that she overwaters and kills. She begins doubting that she can care for anything. Wanting to prove herself capable of caring for the children in her five-year plan, they bring Marley into their lives. Amidst his escapades and destruction,

John and Jen find they are expecting their first child. Their joy turns to grief when the pregnancy ends in the first months. Deeply saddened, Jen returns home from the hospital and sits quietly in the living room with a box of tissue. Marley, 100 pounds of perpetual motion, walks over to Jen and sits quietly at her feet, laying his head on her knee. They share a profound sadness. Hard things happen in life that we do not understand.

When we commit to stand by one another in, “good times and bad,” we have no idea of what the future may hold. The bad times stretch the heart. John and Jen were stretched and sustained in their love for each other. They would go on to have three beautiful children. Years later, in the chaos and noise of the children and Marley, John apologizes to Jen saying, “This was certainly not part of your five year plan.” Jen responds, “No John, it is not how we had planned it. It is so much better and far more precious.”

Our Gospel is about being transformed from who we are into a mode of being that we do not yet understand. Marriage, more than anything else, is an openness to transformation. We don't usually think of it that way. A healthy marriage enjoys a sacred dynamic. *I love you, NOT so that you love me; I love you unconditionally, because I choose to.* When we stand in the light of our spouse's love, it invites us to become something more than what we are today; we want to be a better person. That is the sacred dynamic. I think that is why we hear Jesus so often compare marriage and the wedding feast to the Kingdom of God. In both, we are touched by an unconditional love with the invitation to become something more. *Ultimately, all creation moves to convergence in the heart of Christ.*

Hard things happen in life that we do not understand. In the messiness of life, St Paul prays with us today, “May God our Father encourage your hearts and strengthen them in every good deed and word.” 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians 2:16

Our reception of the Eucharist is our opportunity to feel the encouragement of God’s unconditional love. Jesus teaches that those deemed worthy will be like angels. Life, and our final transformation, may not be how we planned it, or how we envisioned it, but it is so much better and far more precious than we could ever imagine.

## References

All scripture quotations are taken from;. (1987). *The New American Bible, Revised edition*. USCCB.

Grogan, J. (2005). *Marley and Me*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers.

**Note:** I have not given away the plot of John Grogan's book *Marley and Me*. To anyone who has ever owned a dog, it is an entertaining read.