

Homily, 32nd Year in Ordinary time, Year C

There's an amusing story about a widow who died and went to heaven. While walking around her new place, she saw her husband walking hand-in-hand with another woman.

The wife confronted him, saying "Hey, you're married to me. You're committing adultery!"

The husband replied, "Didn't we say 'Till death do us part'? So this is allowed now."

The husband was correct, but the wife should have countered, quoting Jesus: "In the age to come, there's no more marrying or giving to marriage for they will be like angels."

There was a story about a rich and famous man died and arrived at the gates of heaven. "What have you done that entitles you to admission in heaven?" asked St. Peter. "I once gave a needy beggar one dollar," answered this man.

"Is that correct, Angel Gabriel?" inquired St. Peter.

"Yes, St. Peter," said the angel. St. Peter continued: "What else have you done?" "Well, I once gave a newspaper boy, two dollars," said the man.

"That's on the record," said the angel again. "And what else have you done to your credit?" asked St. Peter. "That's all I can remember," said the man.

"Angel Gabriel, what shall we do with this man," St. Peter asked. "St. Peter, give him back his three dollars and tell him to go to hell!" said the angel.

Have we brought anyone closer to God? And, see you in heaven!

Do you believe, really believe, in life after death? Do you believe, really believe, that there is a heaven and a hell? In both the first reading from the Old Testament and in the Gospel, we have tremendous testimony of the existence of life after death and of heaven and hell. The belief of the young men in the first reading was so strong that they were willing to endure torture and death. They were confident that a happier life awaited them, if they were loyal to God and obeyed His commandments. They even amazed their torturers with their faith and willingness to endure death for their beliefs.

In the Gospel, Jesus gives us one of the best glimpses of life after death. He says that we will become like angels, spiritual beings, in complete happiness with God. He again reminds us in a very subtle way, actually with saying it, that the ways of God are not human ways. He hints that we should not place human understandings on the divine. Our relationship in heaven will be with God and only because we are one with God will we be united with each other. This is a rather difficult theological point, but we need only accept the word of Jesus on it.

Anthony DeMello SJ, tells the story of a Muslim holy man who had just finished preaching. A heckler from the audience shouted out, " instead of spouting

spiritual theories why don't you show us something practical?"

Kind of surprised, the holy man asked , "What kind of practical thing do you want me to show you?" The man was pleased that he had made the speaker uncomfortable and was making an impression on the audience, replied, "For instance show us an apple from the garden of paradise."

Immediately the holy man bent down and picked up an apple and handed it to him. "But this apple is bad on one side," said the man. "Surely a heavenly apple would be perfect," said the Mulla, "but given your present faculties, this is as near to a heavenly apple as you will ever get."

That same situation confronts us today, How are we to see a perfect apple with imperfect eyes?" We have Jesus' words from scripture when He said that, "Eye has not seen nor ear heard what God has in store for those that love him."

We are a people of hope. Hope in the promise of a God who loves us so very much that he took on our humanity and our sinfulness and purchased our redemption by dying on a cross. If that is not a testimony to His love and concern for us, what is? It was the ultimate act, in a human context, to prove to us His love.

What must we do to deserve, even in a small way, this love and promise of everlasting happiness with God? Jesus put it in very simply when He said, “Love God with your whole being and love your neighbor as yourself.” Keep these commandments and you will have your reward in heaven. Jesus promises it. But its not just a one way contract. Jesus promises life, but we have to keep our end of the agreement. We have to try to live a life deserving of that life everlasting. We have to keep faith, we have to be a people of hope and we have to live this life so as to encourage others to life the life Christ wants us to live.

And so, as we continue our Eucharist celebration and gather around the table of the Lord, we give thanks to Almighty God for the opportunity to share in the foretaste of the Heavenly Banquet that waits us in the place that God has prepared for us!