

32nd SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME; Nov. 6th 2022
2 Maccabees 7: 1-2, 9-14; 2 Thessalonians 2: 16-35; Luke 20: 27-38

Dear Sisters & Brothers,

The main point of attraction in today's first reading is the dramatic description of the supreme sacrifice, the 7 brothers and their mother made to protect their ancestral law and beliefs. These young people considered eternal life more valuable than the temporary material comfort of the world. In order to have the full picture, we need to read the entire chapter 7 of 2Maccabees. Antiochus the successor of Alexander the Great ascended to throne about 175 BC as the Emperor of Greece. By the time the Jews were captives under Greek regime. He tried to impose the Greek customs and rituals on the Jews. But there was a core of Jewish priests and people who refused to abandon the faith and convictions of their forefathers and to be Hellenized. The seven brothers and their mother belonged to this small group.

The King forced the seven brothers in vain to eat pork which was prohibited for the Jews according to the Book of Leviticus. But their mother being zealous over the Law of her ancestors encouraged her sons, one by one, not to yield to the promises of the King just to save their lives on earth, rather to undergo the torture. They all opted to die rather than to forfeit their faith and convictions for material and physical comforts. Finally the mother too was assassinated. History shows that later king Antiochus suffered defeat from Persia and Judas Maccabeus, the Jewish hero, and ended in a pathetic death.

The Book of 2 Maccabees became the favorite book for the early Christians especially during the three centuries of Roman persecution. They could identify themselves with the faithful Jews who sacrificed their lives for their God and faith. Similarly, the Christians would choose Christ and his teachings rather than choosing the Roman pagan religion and culture. Like the Jews of the Maccabean era, they would choose to suffer rather than to reject their faith and religion. Thus, thousands of early Christians sacrificed their lives in the Roman amphitheater before the wild animals and also many were kept as burning torches in the Roman streets on daily basis. The enemies dreamed of the total elimination of Christianity. But, as in the case of Antiochus, the enemies of Christianity perished one after another, but Christianity spread vastly all over the world and it still continues to exist.

What do these incidents teach us in this modern age? Of course, we may not have to choose between our faith and persecution, especially in America. But still in many Asian countries, Africa and Middle East people suffer for being Christians. Though there is no physical attack on Christians in our country, today Christianity and Jesus are attacked from every corner by bad media. The non-Christians will never speak a word against Jesus and his teachings. They have high respect for him. Very often the attack on Christ and Christian values do not come from outside, rather it comes from the fallen away Christians themselves. Though we are fully free here to defend our faith and religion, when Jesus is attacked by media, majority of Christians in our country keep quiet and remain indifferent. **It is very evident that among the world religions that Christians are the most indifferent people towards their religion and faith.** Even when their master is attacked unjustly the Christians never move to defend Christ. Under the pretext of peace and harmony, we keep mum.

It is the duty of every Christian to defend and protect the faith and religion and hand them over to the future generation. It is our duty to keep Jesus alive for our children's future. We need to examine our conscience and see, how deep our faith is and how respectful we are to our religion and values. If Jesus is priority number one in our lives, we will never deviate from our faith in any situations. If today you are here in the Church, it means that your parents have given you faith. It is then your duty to pass it to the same to the future generation, your children. Unfortunately, these days the young parents are not seen very much in the Church with their children. At the same time they impose so many activities on their kids more than they can handle. They want their children to achieve all the skills and they push them to the boundaries. I wonder, how many of them encourage and push the children a bit to practice their faith? How many of them teach their children how to pray and trust in Jesus? The best gift and wealth the parents can give to their children are not the real estate, bank deposits or a four bedroom house; rather Jesus and his values. And in their difficult time, the faith and values you have given them will be their strength and protection. In Acts of the Apostle chapter 4:12, St. Peter says, **“There is no salvation through anyone else, nor is there any other name under heaven given to the human race by which we are to be saved,” but the name of Jesus Christ. Amen**