

- 1) If you are like me, you have probably long since given up on the news.
- 2) And yet every so often there are moments of such sublime . . . silliness there,
 - i) That it makes the nightly news almost worth watching.
- 3) Like that moment in the news last week
 - a) When televangelist Pat Robertson
 - i) endorsed Rudy Giuliani in his run for the presidency.
 - b) here we have our pro-gay, pro-choice, former mayor,
 - i) who is on his third wife
 - ii) and has a decided penchant for dressing up in women's clothes
 - (1) and taking to the stage,
 - c) Receiving the political backing of a man who believes
 - i) that divorce and remarriage is sinful,
 - ii) sex outside of marriage is adultery,
 - iii) and that September 11th happened
 - (1) precisely because of America's pro-gay, pro-choice policies!
- 4) I guess it is just another proof that "Politics makes strange bedfellows",
- 5) but it is not all that strange.
 - a) For it reveals that these two gentlemen,
 - i) Indeed most leaders,
 - ii) be they bishops in churches,
 - iii) pastors in parishes
 - iv) Executives in their corner offices or presidents in the white house
 - (1) have something in common
 - (2) For them Politics is not about issues; values, and ideals.
 - (3) No – those are just what they use to manipulate us
 - (4) Politics is about power.
 - (a) Getting it, and keeping it.
- 6) The Sadducees in today's gospel reading would have understood this very well.
 - a) They were the high priests, the absolute religious leaders in Jesus' day.
 - b) And yet strangely enough they worked with the Romans
 - i) Whom as pagans they should have despised.
 - c) Strangely enough They worked with the Pharisees
 - i) Whom as laypeople who claimed that you could be holy without the temple sacrifices, simply by following the lay,
 - ii) they should have rejected.
 - d) And yet it is not all that strange;
 - i) Because they had something in common with both roman and Pharisee-
 - (1) Wanting power,getting power and keeping it.
- 7) The Sadducees would have been absolutely uninterested then
 - a) In this itinerant preacher named Jesus
 - b) Except for one thing;
 - i) He believed in the resurrection of the dead.
 - c) Now the Sadducees believed that only the books of Genesis Exodus, Leviticus Numbers and Deuteronomy were truly sacred scripture;

- i) and in those books there is no mention of the dead.
- d) Thus they did not believe in it. And thought Jesus was crazy for believing in it too.
- 8) Hence the Sadducees decide to make Jesus look silly,
 - a) by applying his belief in the resurrection to an ancient marriage custom.
 - i) Because in the ancient world, if a husband died without leaving any children.
 - b) the Law said that the husband's brother was supposed to marry the brother's wife.
- 9) This custom is found in Deuteronomy and the Sadducees believed it was God's law.
 - a) So they pose the question to Jesus where a woman marries seven brothers,
 - i) Each one dying before he can give her children.
 - ii) At the resurrection, who would be her husband?
 - b) This was more than just an idle question:
 - i) For in Jesus' day a married woman could not really inherit property;
 - (1) Indeed many believed she was property – of her husband.
 - ii) Thus a widow without children was left penniless; bereft unless someone married her.
 - c) But the Sadducees did not care about the woman;
 - i) they just wanted to make Jesus look silly by having to say that at the resurrection of the dead this woman would have to go on living with seven husbands; an impossibility according to Jewish Law.
- 10) The story ends without letting us know how the Sadducees reacted to Jesus' novel answer,
 - a) that in the resurrection of the dead we are like angels, and longer marry.
- 11) Did they walk away angry? Perhaps.
- 12) Did they walk away amused? Maybe.
 - a) But they should have walked away frightened
- 13) Because they would have known the story of the Maccabees,
 - i) those seven brothers we hear about in today's first reading,
 - ii) for whom resurrection of the dead did not mean they would be resuscitated to live as they lived before.
 - iii) But rather that they would be transformed precisely to establish justice and equality and freedom.
- 14) Thus when Jesus said he believed in the resurrection of the dead,
 - a) he was not saying that they would be resuscitated
 - i) to live in a world where the religious power and military might of the Sadducees and the Romans would continue,
 - b) But that they would be transformed
 - i) to establish a world in which all injustice would end,
 - (a) even marriage will be done away with, says Jesus;
 - (i) Along with all its injustices
 - 1. Such as the one that lay at the root of the Sadducees question.
 - (ii) And be replaced by the union of all the faithful with God.
- 15) Such words would not have pleased the Sadducees; or the Pharisees, or the Romans or the Greeks or anyone in his day whose interest lay in power over others.

- a) Because belief in the resurrection meant for Jesus and his people that their rule was at an end or justice is coming.
- 16) Such words should not please the giulianis and robertsons and anyone who seek to obtain and maintain power over us; except for one thing;
 - a) We have allowed the words “I believe in the resurrection of the dead” to become a sentence, which we muble uring the creed;
 - i) Rather than what it originally was
 - (1) A promise to us
 - (a) That injustice and death are never the last words but justice and new life are.
 - (2) And a Challenge for us
 - (a) To share that promise with others,
 - (i) By building families and marriages and churches and whole peoples
 - 1. Where justice and equality are the goals
 - (ii) Communities that believe what the Macabees believed
 - (iii) What Jesus believed
 - (iv) And what our Church, when it is following its best lights believes
 - 1. That in the resurrection
 - 2. Not only are we raised from the dead,
 - 3. Justice is too.