Jesus and the Sadducees: Divine Providence before Election Day

By Pedro Mendez

Jesus’ determined *journey* to Jerusalem has ended—He is already in Jerusalem in the Temple area. Jesus, the Prophet, is in Jerusalem to give up his life for the salvation of the world “for it is impossible that a prophet should die outside of Jerusalem” (Lk 13:33b). Before fulfilling the mission that the Father has entrusted him, Jesus’ authority is challenged by the chief priests, the scribes and the Sadducees. Today’s gospel reveals that the Sadducees—a priestly party that does not believe in the resurrection and in the angels—challenges Jesus’ authority by asking him a question regarding the resurrection. The lack of faith in the resurrection was not a general belief for the Jewish people. Today’s first reading reveals that in the Old Testament times there were already people willing to die in faithfulness to the Law with the *hope of the resurrection* (2 Mc 7:14). In the New Testament, the Pharisees believed in the resurrection.

Now, why do the Sadducees ask Jesus a question about something they do not believe in? Some biblical scholars believe that the Sadducees intended to put Jesus in a trap by using the levirate marriage legislation (brother-in-law marriage) of the Torah as their main argument (Deut. 25:5). And Indeed, the Torah—the only authoritative books of the Sadducees—does not reveal *explicitly* the theme of the resurrection. It does it *implicitly*. Thus, Jesus answers the Sadducees by using the *implicit* passage of the Torah regarding the resurrection (Exodus 3:2, 5). *By doing so, Jesus reveals that his authority is over the Sadducees by interpreting the Torah appropriately in a pivotal topic of human hope: the resurrection. Consequently, Jesus’ response “affirms his authority to speak for God”* (Father Robert Karris, O.F.M)*.* As the Gospel bears witness, Jesus proved that the theme of the resurrection in the Torah was true not only by his convincing teaching; but also by his victory over death!

In our days, who has authority in our lives, families and society? i.e. Who rules our mind, will, body, emotions and desires? Is Jesus the ultimate authoritative voice in our conscience? If He is, how do we look for his guidance in daily life experiences, as well as regarding social, national and global decisions? *We, Christians, are called to allow Jesus to have total authority in our lives, families and society by letting him form our conscience according to God’s truth which is always hopeful.* Therefore, the message of Jesus’ authority in our lives continues to be relevant in our days, especially when we approach Election Day.

And, Jesus continues to form our conscience through the power of Holy Spirit in the Church. The United States Catholic Conference of Bishops affirms, throughout the book: *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, that God continues to form our conscience when we study prayerfully Sacred Scripture and the doctrine of the Catholic Church, as well as through the heart of people of good will. By doing so, our conscience is impelled to strive for the respect and promotion of human dignity and the continuous effort for achieving, in the best possible way through our votes, the principles of the common good, subsidiarity, and solidarity.

God is inviting us today to allow Jesus, through His body the Church, to be the ultimate authoritative voice in our lives, families and society. By doing so, we might experience the joy of the resurrection not only as a reality in the past and a hopeful event in the future; but also as a reality here and now in our personal and social life. Who has authority in our lives? Hopefully, Jesus through his Body the Church!