

**Maccabees 7:1-2. 9-14; Ps 16; Thess 2:16-3:5; Luke 20:27-38**

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A few years ago I probably would have screamed. There are advantages to being an angry young man; even in carrying on some of those traits into middle age. A good scream in outrage and fury can be very satisfying. I have to find an alternative, now-a-days. Apparently that is expected. Pity.

Two articles I read this week concerning the Church gave me a strong urge to resort to my youthful intemperance, and scream. But I managed to hold it back. The first repressed scream was induced by the Pontifical Academy for Life. This think tank was set up in 1994 to promote Catholic doctrine on human life and personal dignity in the fields of biomedicine and law for the '*promotion and defence of life, above all the direct relation that they have with Christian Morality and the Church's Magisterium.*' So what do Professor Mariana Mazzucato who is an atheist and supports abortion, Robert Dell'Oro Catholic professor of moral theology who supports abortion, and Tlou Sheila – a former health minister in Botswana –who enthusiastically supports artificial contraception and rather ominously refuses to state her position on abortion all have in common? They are all recently appointed members of the above named academy. The president of the Academy, Archbishop Paglia, has overseen these choices and disingenuously stated that they all '*defend life in its entirety.*'<sup>1</sup> Well, Your Grace, abortion

and the defence so life hardly go hand in hand, no matter how you wish to contort the truth. You are, if you forgive the Old Testament allusion, feeding us pig's flesh.

In another article ,a retired Catholic priest in Ireland named Fr Seán Sheehy went too far in telling a congregation that there is hell and that practicing homosexuality and abortion and transgenderism were not compatible with Christianity. <sup>2</sup> Some people walked out of the service and a storm erupted on social media, with the result that Bishop Ray Browne of the Diocese of Kerry withdrew the Fr. Sheehy's permission to preach and went on to say that '*the views expressed to do not represent the Christian position.*' It may be that Fr. Sheehy expressed himself a little too vehemently; that he came across crudely and combatively, but what he said was absolutely in accordance with scripture and Christian teaching. Bishop Browne might be able to plug into some nice proof texts from the Bible that show God is all cuddly, such as quoting 'Blessed are the gentle', and thereby insinuate that Fr. Sheehy is terribly un-Christian, but he is being disingenuous. Whatever your personal views or concerns, the Bishop is clearly forgetful about what the Church teaches. That was scream number two.

When Jesus speaks today, he has walked into a dispute about the afterlife. The Saducees, the intellectual elite of the day, did not believe in a resurrection of the body after death. This could be called a traditional, scripture-base, view of Judaism, which was not preoccupied

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<sup>1</sup> Somerville-Knapman OSB, The Catholic Herald, All is not well at the Pontifical Academy, October 31, 2022 accessed 4<sup>th</sup> November, 2022

<sup>2</sup> Perrins, Laura, *Has Catholic priest in Ireland really been cancelled by his Bishop for preaching against sin?* Catholic Herald, Nov 2 2022 accessed 4 November 2022

Diocese of Kerry, for the Bishops's Statement  
<https://www.dioceseofkerry.ie/2022/11/statement-issued-on-behalf-of-the-diocese-of-kerry-regarding-the-offending-homilies/> accessed 4 Nov.

The Guardian for a predictable response:  
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/nov/03/uproar-after-irish-priest-says-varadkar-and-other-gay-politicians-will-go-to-hell> accessed 4Nov.

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with what happened in the afterlife.<sup>3</sup> In Jesus's time however, there was a developing, popular belief that there was an afterlife, and this was pretty much like this life, but with all the badness and sadness taken out of it. This is what the Sadducees are mocking with their question to Jesus. What life will be like in heaven we will not know until we get there, although we are given a strong impression by Jesus' response to this question about marriage. He gives a correction both to those who do not believe in it at all, as well as to those who believe it to be a kind of 'perfected world'.<sup>4</sup> He says;

*The dead do not marry because they can no longer die, for they are the same as the angels, and being children of the resurrection they are sons of God.*<sup>5</sup>

The words Jesus use have a significance beyond the question of marriage: it is part of the much larger teaching significance of his life. To the Sadducees, he says you are offered something more than a future of dust. To the Pharisees – who see something of the truth –, he says you must lift up your hearts to a higher understanding of the Resurrection. For us, Resurrection is not continuation with a difference, it is a radical break, with, paradoxically, discernible continuity.

What is the connection here between my inner screams and the Gospel? Well, I find that the Pontifical Academy for Life and the Bishop of Kerry have forgotten all about the Christian promise of the Resurrection, which is that we are to be elevated to be sons and daughters of God. This requires conversion away from an image of

myself perfected by my own hands and desires, towards an image of God perfecting me according to *His* desire. The earthly voices which I have spoken of, although sadly spoken from within the Church, offer only death, and should be permitted no place in our hearts. Instead, our song should be as the Psalm says:

*I kept my feet firmly in your paths;  
There was no faltering in my steps.  
I am here and I call, you will hear me, O God.  
Turn your ear to me; hear my words.*<sup>6</sup>

And with that, my screams fade and are replaced with a deep sense of peace.

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<sup>3</sup> Stoger, Alois, *The Gospel According to Luke, vol 2: New Testament for Spiritual reading*, (London, Burn and Oates, 1969) pp135-199

<sup>4</sup> Like Jehovah's witnesses today.

<sup>5</sup> Luke 20:27-28.

<sup>6</sup> Ps 16 5-6.