

Beyond Black and White

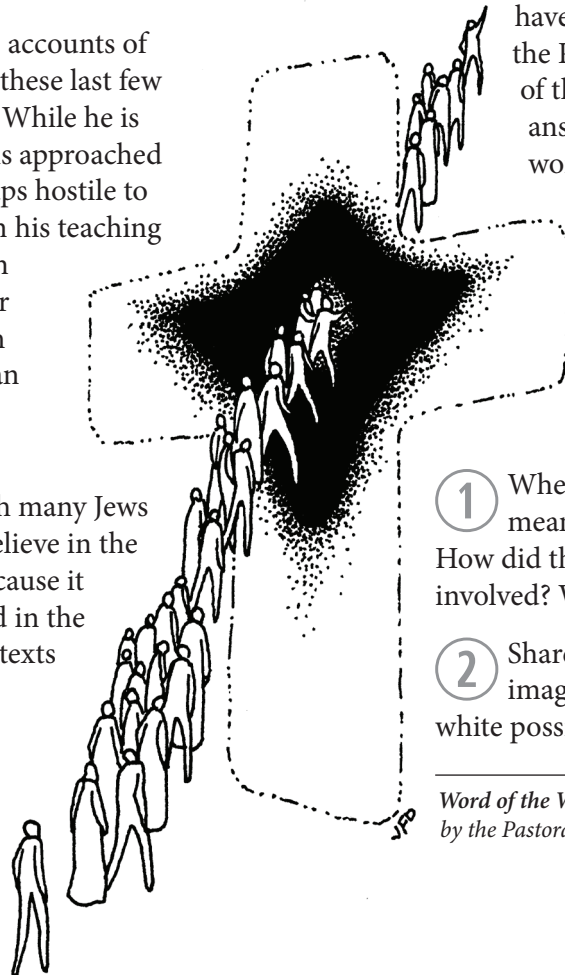
This Week's Readings at Mass

- ▶ 2 Maccabees 7:1-2, 9-14 - Martyrdom of a mother and her sons
- ▶ 2 Thessalonians 2:16-3:5 - The gospel versus empty fables
- ▶ Luke 20:27-38 or 20:27, 34-38 - The resurrection of the dead

The first reading and the Gospel reading both address questions of the resurrection of the dead. Although Christians now take belief in resurrection for granted as fundamental to our faith, that belief wasn't the norm for all Jews in Jesus' time. The passage from 2 Maccabees concerning the seven brothers who willingly face torture and death with the hope of resurrection is one of the few references to pre-Christian belief in the concept. Written within about 200 years of Jesus' birth, it portrayed a new and emerging idea which had not yet taken hold among all of Jesus' contemporaries. Some people, like the Sadducees, still flatly denied the possibility, as shown in the Gospel reading.

We have been following the accounts of Jesus' journey to Jerusalem these last few weeks. Now he has arrived. While he is teaching in the Temple, he is approached successively by several groups hostile to him. They try to trap him in his teaching with the hopes that they can have him arrested, either for openly contradicting Jewish laws or for criticizing Roman rule.

The Sadducees, this week's opponents, were in line with many Jews of Jesus' day who did not believe in the resurrection of the dead because it was never clearly referenced in the Torah (the most important texts and set of laws for Jews). They pose a seemingly impossible scenario that has no easy answer for the expert philosophers, lawyers, and educated Jewish class of the time.



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“The King of the world will raise us up to live again forever.”

Sheepish Question:
How must I act today in the knowledge that my life with God is for all time?

As usual, Jesus offers a “third way” answer; refusing an either/or response. His listeners would have expected him to either side with the Pharisees (who accepted resurrection of the dead) or with the Sadducees. His answer opens up the idea of a whole new world where producing offspring to keep one's identity alive isn't a central reason for marriage. In his response, he suggests that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are still alive in some mysterious way.

Questions of the Week

- ① When have you witnessed a good and well-meaning person being trapped or framed? How did that person handle it? Did you get involved? Why or why not?
- ② Share about a time when you had your imagination widened beyond a black or white possibility.