32nd-C

MDP of God

Our first reading today from the book of 2nd Maccabees is, I believe, the most inspiring story of the bible [with the exception of Jesus]

Unfortunately our reading is an edited version of the story.

It cuts out the details on how each of these brothers were tortured.

It also cuts out the words and example of the mother of these seven boys, *and this mother is one of the bravest, most faithful, devoted people in the whole bible.*

Let me just give a little background to this story

This story occurs almost 200 years before the time of Christ

The land of Israel was being ruled by the Greeks – specifically King Antiocus II who wanted to unite all the peoples he ruled in Greek ways

So he was trying to destroy their local customs - for the people of Israel that meant they had to renounce God and His laws to embrace pagan ways

Part of the ritual law that God had imposed on the people through Moses forbid them to eat pork

I can’t get into all the reasons for that law in this homily

But it was put on the people to remind them of their sinfulness until the time when the Savior would come

So the eating of pork, *was not something* ***intrinsically evil***, but was a disciplinary law God had imposed for a specific period of time [Meat on Friday – while the law is in effect it’s binding]

Antiocus was forcing people to break the law of Moses – and of course to break the law – would separate them from God – severe them from the covenant.

*Many of God’s people were choosing to renounce the covenant rather than face torture and death.*

Their lives in this world were more important than being faithful to God

Now just try to imagine what these people were facing

Disobey God or die - Disobey God or be tortured to death

Again, what was cut out here was the description of how each of the brothers had their tongue cut out -they were scalped- their hands and feet cut off.- **It was brutal**

And while still alive they put them in a huge frying pan and cooked them to death

## The mother watched her seven sons die in this manner {read description]

Read 2 Mac 7:20 – 23

Most admirable and worthy of everlasting remembrance was the mother, who saw her seven sons perish in a single day, yet bore it courageously because of her hope in the Lord.

Filled with a noble spirit that stirred her womanly heart with manly courage, she exhorted each of them in the language of their forefathers with these words:

"I do not know how you came into existence in my womb; it was not I who gave you the breath of life, nor was it I who set in order the elements of which each of you is composed.

Therefore, since it is the Creator of the universe who shapes each man's beginning, as he brings about the origin of everything, he, in his mercy, will give you back both breath and life, because you now disregard yourselves for the sake of his law."

When she had one son left the king tried to persuade the mother to talk her son into disobeying God’s laws. The king says that if the son will disobey God that the king will make him rich and give him a high office in the Kingdom. Listen to what she says:

Read 2 Mac 7: 26 –29

After he had urged her for a long time, she went through the motions of persuading her son.

In derision of the cruel tyrant, she leaned over close to her son and said in their native language: "Son, have pity on me, who carried you in my womb for nine months, nursed you for three years, brought you up, educated and supported you to your present age.

I beg you, child, to look at the heavens and the earth and see all that is in them; then you will know that God did not make them out of existing things; and in the same way the human race came into existence.

Do not be afraid of this executioner, but be worthy of your brothers and accept death, so that in the time of mercy I may receive you again with them."

Here is a mother who had to bear what must have been unbelievable torment

To see her seven sons tortured to death

But her faith is **so strong** in the Res of the just, that she encourages them to glorify God by giving up their lives

Here is a woman who loves God above all else – *A woman who loves her sons so much that she encourages them to be great saints*

Many people than and now, would look at what this woman and her sons did and think them naïve – foolish – stupid

Many then and now would say, “Hey, you’re only eating a little pork, God will get over it.”

^^^ Why would you sacrifice so much just to obey a stupid law?”

^^^ Your being stupid in being faithful to God in this case.

### “God is expecting **too much of you**”

But my friends, this mother knew that this life is only a test. **Will we live our lives in a way that glorifies God or not?**

Will we put our hopes and dreams ahead of God’s will, or will we truly seek for God’s will to be done on earth as it is in heaven [Pray in the Our Father]

Will we put faithfulness to God above all else, or will we merely pay lip service to God disobeying Him when it’s not convenient?

This woman and her sons, loved God

^^^ put God’s Will first in their lives

^^^ thought it more important to glorify God, than to live long and comfortable lives

For them faith wasn’t a matter of mere words, *but the most important thing in their lives*

#### Being faithful to God was the be all and end all of their existence

There was another man, Eleazar – who earlier in 2 Maccabees was put in the same situation

Those who were in charge of enforcing the apostasy said to him, “Look, we’ve been friends for a long time. Just bring some other food ***– just pretend to eat the forbidden food***, that way you’ll be okay to God and you’ll be alright with the king-we’ll let you get away with it”

Eleazor said, “It would be unbecoming to make such a pretense; many young men would think I was unfaithful. **I would lead them astray**. Therefore, by manfully giving up my life now, I will prove myself worthy of my old age, and I will leave the young an example of how to die willingly and generously for the revered and holy laws”

The guys who had been kindly disposed toward him – were enraged – they became even more hostile – *they* ***beat*** *him to death*.

[By the way, when your faithful to God, you’ll see that same dynamic. Those who are unfaithful oftentimes hate someone who is faithful. *The faithful person reminds them of their own weakness and cowardice* – so the unfaithful person will often come to hate the faithful—many people today hate the Catholic Church for remaining faithful to the teaching of the bible]

My friends, {Just a quick side point} as I said this occurred almost 2200 years ago.

This woman and her sons have been in glory ever since

Eleazor has been in glory ever since then.

Others back than chose to disobey God - in essence saying, “God, my life and convenience **here** is more important to me than you are – being faithful to your commands.”

*Where are they now*? They may have gotten another 20 or 30 or 40 years of life,[maybe only died 2150 years ago instead of 2200 years ago] but where are they now?

After a long stay in Purgatory [if they repented] may have made it to heaven, but we can be sure their place would not be nearly as exalted as this mother and her sons. [or Eleazor’s]

Was it worth it for them? When they faced God did they hear the words, “Well done and faithful servant, come into my kingdom?”

# You can be sure this woman and her sons heard those words

When the others who chose to disobey faced God could they look Him in the eye and say “I did my best Lord. I sought to glorify you Lord” – **I doubt it**

They were probably more like Nazi death camp guards who say, “I was just obeying orders”

My dear friends, I’d like you to compare the attitude – the courage – the faithfulness of this mother and her sons [courage of 90 year old Eleazor], with the attitude of many people today.

In the battle against AIDS – there are those who encourage the passing out of condoms. They’ll say, “Kids are going to do it anyway, they at least ought to be protected.”

The attitude is, “Let’s make it safer for kids when the sin”-basically saying to kids, “we expect you to sin”

[Compare that attitude with this woman’s zeal to keep her children faithful to God]

In the area of sexuality of course there are several examples – living a homosexual lifestyle [which God says is a dead end—there are many today who think they’re more compassionate than God—you can’t be more compassionate than God—if your supportive of people as they disobey God—you’re encouraging them to a life of unhappiness]

Sex outside of marriage [which is forbidden by God] – divorce and remarriage outside of the Church [which is contrary to God’s teaching]

Where the attitude is, “Those laws of God are just too much to expect us to obey.”—“I want to do what I want to do—I don’t care what God says”

Tell this woman and her sons – tell Eleazor that the commandments of God are too much to expect us to obey

And then of course, there’s the poor example being set for others- especially for the young

40 years ago it was very unusual for a couple to live together before marriage – but now, thanks to the example of some parents – some uncles and aunts – older brothers and sisters – a lot of people think, “Well they did it, it must be okay.”

We desperately need people with the conviction of Eleazor – who would rather lay down his life then give bad example to the young.

There’s also the command of God to worship Him on Sunday’s with the Christian community

When people miss Mass – they themselves break God’s command.

But even more importantly, they give a horrendous example to our young people. [They teach falsely, *God’s laws don’t have to be taken seriously]*

My friends, the fact is God’s Holy Spirit inspired the writing of these events – to inspire us – to remind us how God’s laws (even temporary laws) – are to always to be taken seriously.

This woman and her sons are such an incredible inspiration to me

Whenever I get in that – “boy this is hard – this is too much to ask” mode, I just think of this woman and her sons.

Usually, whatever I’m complaining about – **is nothing** compared to the price they paid to be faithful.

God calls us, always to be faithful – always to give good example – always to put Him a head of any other considerations.