**My Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,**

**How do we know there is life after this life? We say in our Creed, “I believe in the resurrection of the body and life everlasting”, but how do we really know what we believe to be true, is true?**

**That is the question Jesus answers for us in this conversation with the Sadducees who did not believe in the resurrection. They propose for him the improbable question of the widow of seven brothers who dies about whose wife she will be in her risen life.**

**For me, the really impressive thing about Jesus is he meets the Sadducees where they are. You see, the Sadducees were people of the Torah, that is the first five books of the Bible, which we often refer to by its Greek name, the Pentateuch. That was the basis of their faith. For them, if something wasn’t in the Torah, they simply couldn’t believe in it. In their estimation, since nothing is said of eternal life, resurrection, or immortality in the Torah, it should not be accepted as part of the faith.**

**The first thing Jesus does is discount their question of which of the seven brothers will the widow be married to at the resurrection. He simply states, “The children of this age marry and remarry; but those who are deemed worthy to attain to the coming age and to the resurrection of the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage.”**

**We acknowledge this even in the marriage ritual where the spouses promise to be faithful to each other “until death do us part”. Death breaks the bond of marriage. I’ll come back to this point in a minute.**

**But then Jesus takes on the Sadducees on their understanding of the Torah by reminding them how God makes himself known to Moses before the burning bush, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” He doesn’t say I WAS the God of your father and Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. God speaks in the present tense. So, Jesus concludes that God “is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for to him all are alive.”**

**Now, some may say, “Well, maybe that convinced the Sadducees, but I’m not so sure there is life after death. How can I know for sure?”**

**For those of us who see with the eyes of faith, the surest sign for us is the sign of the cross on which we know that Jesus died, and then the empty tomb of Easter morning and the many encounters he had in the flesh with his disciples that tell us HE LIVES!**

**Then, when we encounter him in our own lives protecting us, comforting us, forgiving us, and showing us how to love one another, we can say as the old Spiritual attests, “He walks with me; He talks to me; He guides me along the way. You ask me how I know He lives, He lives within my heart.”**

**But, I know there are still some among us who are sincerely struggling with this question of life after life. If there are such here I would like to recount a story of a marriage that I often tell at weddings. In fact, I shared it at a wedding that I celebrated yesterday.**

**It is the story of the marriage of my parents. They weren’t terribly well-educated. My Dad had to quit school and go to work at 16 because his Father lost everything in the Great Depression. My Mother had to quit school and go to work at 14 when her Father died. Her Mother was pregnant with their fifth child and my Mother and to support the family. So, I don’t know where or how my parents learned this, but I do know, since my bedroom was right across the hall from theirs, there was never a night, at least when I was awake, that they didn’t kneel down and say their prayers together. It was just something that they did. It was an ordinary part of their life together.**

**My Mother was rather young when she died. I was in the Seminary then, studying to be a priest. When I came home on holidays and for the summer, I would say my prayers and get in bed. Dad was still on his knees, saying his prayers. I guess I got a little jealous because after a while—I mean I was the one studying to be a priest—and he was doing all that praying. I finally asked him, “Dad, why does it take you so long to say your prayers”. He said, “ Well, first I say my prayers, then I say your Mother’s. That way I still feel her with me. She stays with me.” From my parents, I learned of a love that is stronger than death. Death may have broken the bond of their marriage, but it could not loosen the bond of their love.**

**You see, my dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ, people die, but love never dies. Who here loves a loved one less because he or she has died? Love never dies.**

**St. John tells us in his first letter, “God is love and he who abides in love, abides in God and God in him.” Love then is forever! And every real, true love we experience in this life will live forever.**

**That’s why I believe in life after this life and that’s why I always look forward to heaven as a great family reunion. As the old Gospel song says, WHEN ALL GOD’S CHILDREN GET TOGETHER, WHAT A TIME, WHAT A TIME, WHAT A TIME! WHEN ALL GOD’S CHILDREN GET TOGETHER, WHAT A TIME WE’RE GONNA’ HAVE!**

**Look forward to it, Children! Work for it! It’s been promised to you! The price has been paid for you with the blood of our Savior.**

**No, I can’t prove that there is life after this life. No one can. We have to stand on faith. “Faith is the confident assurance of things hoped for, and the conviction about things we do not see”, we’re told in the 11th Chapter of Hebrews. I am confident that Jesus is who He says He is—the Christ, the Son of the Living God—who came to live this life with us, suffered and died for our sins, was raised up from the grave on Easter morning and as he said, “has gone before us to prepare a place for us, so that where He is, we also may be. I am convinced of what He says awaits us. That “eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived of the wonderful things that God has prepared for those who love Him.” It is that Word that I stand on that convinces me of “the resurrection of the body and life everlasting.” And that’s why I will forever sing and invite you to sing with me:**

**OH, WHEN ALL GOD’S CHILDREN GET TOGETHER, WHAT A TIME! WHAT A TIME! WHAT A TIME! WHEN ALL GOD’S CHILDREN GET TOGETHER, WHAT A TIME WE’RE GONNA’ HAVE!**