

**An Understanding of Death**    Thirty-second Week in Ordinary Time    Tuesday, November 14, 2017    8:15 AM    **Wis 2:23—3:9;**    Lk17:7-10    (What we are called by Christian vision, the Christian gospel, to believe in is that we shall be raised from the dead and live a fully human life with Christ.)

Today we are reading from the **Book of Wisdom**, and it has some odd ideas in it, odd from a modern view point, first of all that **God created humanity to be imperishable**. What does that mean? It surely could not mean that biologically human life had no death; that would not make any sense because we can see that human life shares with the animal kingdom a certain sort of brief lifespan, coming and going, reproducing, and so on. But **in the Hebrew mind death, physical death, was separation from God, and that we need to know if we are going to understand many of the Psalms.**

Now what the Book of Wisdom is introducing is a different idea, that we should not look at appearances, that **even though people die that doesn't mean they're really dead**. Yes, we can see their body is dead. We bury them. Yet **according to the Book of Wisdom** there is something imperishable about human life, at least **there's something imperishable about wise human life**. Fools may die, but wise persons live **because they have the immortal spirit of holy wisdom**. This was a new idea when it was introduced in the period after the exile, the great Babylonian Exile. So **this is a late idea in the history of Judaism.**

Now the Christian belief is that, yes indeed, we can live forever. However, **in the Christian understanding we do not actually believe in an imperishable spirit**, not as a matter of faith. **We believe as a matter of faith in the resurrection of the body**. We say that in our Creed every Sunday: "I believe in the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting."

So whatever this is that the Book was Wisdom introduces, it is an idea that **we should not live by appearances**; that's valid. We should not deduce from what we see, what is; **we realize there's something else behind, hidden from our eyes, hidden from our ears, a true reality**. We can realize that in the sight of God his children live always, but in what way we don't know. But ultimately what we are called by Christian vision, **the Christian gospel, to believe in is that we shall be raised from the dead and live a fully human life with Christ**, who is the first fruits of the new creation.