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## The God of the living

by Pat Marrin

NCR Today



"God is not god of the dead but of the living." Mark 12:27

In today's Lectionary offering from Tobit 3:1-17, poor Sarah has had almost as many husbands as Zsa Zsa Gabor, and all of them have died on their wedding night at the hands of a demon. The Book of Tobit is a gripping tale about God's answer to prayer. Sarah will require the Archangel Raphael and her kinsman Tobias to rescue her.

The seven husbands reappear in Mark's gospel story about a woman married to seven brothers, obligated under Jewish law to beget heirs to preserve the family name. Yet all of them die without progeny. Jesus is challenged by the Sadducees, who do not believe in resurrection, to explain whose wife the woman will be when she and all seven brothers are resurrected. It is a loaded question, and Jesus tells them they understand neither resurrection nor the scriptures. Having children is not the only way we gain immortality. God guarantees life to his friends, and those who die in God will live with him forever. The key argument, which Jesus applies to the great heroes of Jewish history, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Moses, is that they surely live on, because God is the God of the living, not of the dead.

Vitality, for us, is the sign of friendship with God. Because we believe in resurrection, we live differently, accountable to love and to one another as we expand the family of love that will live forever. This is a consolation to those who will bury loved ones today. It is a challenge for all of us to know that the many victims of poverty and injustice who also die today will rise in witness to ask God for justice. The promise of resurrection is tied to love, to keeping promises, to paying forward and to hoping in spite of all the facts that discourage and frustrate, but in the end cannot stop life.

[These reflections (and sketches) by Pat Marrin are inspired by the day's scripture readings.]

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