**Readings:** Wisdom 2:12, 17-20 / James 3:16-4:3 / Mark 9:30-37
**Theme:** Death – The End?
25th Sunday in Ordinary Time

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Normally no one would like to lose a dear one especially when the latter is in the prime of his/her life.  Similarly nobody would like to lose a beloved leader.  This background might help us appreciate how Peter and his colleagues felt when Jesus first predicted his death (Mark 8:31, last Sunday’s gospel reading). Peter, unable to withstand the thought of their Master dying, took Jesus aside and rebuked him (Mark 8:32). That is, being ‘human’ like us, Peter was so short-sighted of the ways of God that the second part of Jesus’ prediction – his resurrection on third day – did not immediately register in Peter’s mind and heart.

Again, in today’s gospel reading, when Jesus predicted his death and resurrection for the second time (Mark 9:31), the gloom of death so clouded the minds and hearts of the disciples that, we are told that, they failed to understand their Master (Mark 9:32). But for Jesus, who does not only know the ways of the Father, but is the very Way to the Father (John 14: 6), death is not the end – for the resurrection follows!

Whereas, it is customary to have the phrase ‘THE END’ at the end of a movie, it doesn’t mean the END of the actors and actresses, not even the END of those who died in the movie; for soon we see them active in another movie or in actual life.  Similarly, death is not our END BUT THE BEGINNING of another state of life.

As someone may appear sad and poor in a movie but may be a happy-rich person in real life, and vice versa, so is life after death.  That is, some of us may experience problems and poverty in this life but God will make us happy and rich forever in heaven.  On the other hand, some may enjoy the good things of this life and failing to be faithful to God, would experience the pain and poverty of hell.

Beloved, it is through Jesus Christ that God changes our fate for better; it is through Him that our life after death is made forever joyful in heaven.  Yes, He who came to suffer and die, taking upon Himself the misery of humankind, arose on the third day to demonstrate that in Him, death is not our end, but the beginning of an ineffable glorious life!

It is therefore no wonder that Paul, who initially persecuted Christians for what he thought was their ‘false mongering’ that Jesus had risen from the dead, would boldly proclaimed after he had personally experienced the Risen Lord that: ‘our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body’ (Phil 3: 20-21).

The message of our citizenship in heaven reminds me of what a (Ghanaian) friend told me when I once visited him in UK. I had asked him if he were a British citizen after many years in UK. He then answered, ‘Father because I have the ambition of becoming an MP [Member of Parliament] in Ghana, and dual citizenship would disqualify me, I have only RESIDENT and WORK PERMITS in UK.’  Beloved, similarly, let’s retain only RESIDENT and WORK permits on this earth, while we keep our citizenship in heaven, where we aspire to become MPs, namely, **Members of** **Paradise**.

Beloved, we should CAMPAIGN to become MPs of heaven.  This campaign is done not by TV adverts, posters, public speeches, etc., but by FAITH and GOOD LIFE STYLE.

We are ELECTED as MPs [Members of Paradise] not by PEOPLE casting the majority of votes for us, but by GOD who examines the genuineness of our FAITH [our voting paper] and LIFE STYLE [our thumb print].

Finally, I pray that by our genuine faith and good lifestyles, we will always campaign for the Membership of PARADISE, and God will graciously elect us into His Divine Presence, not for only a short term of four or eight years, but for all eternity, Amen!