In today’s Gospel Jesus is in Jerusalem where he will face his final destiny. Evidently from the challenge posed by the Sadducees Jesus comes there with a reputation for speaking about the resurrection of the dead.

I preach pretty regularly about baptism as the sacrament of death and new life.

As Christians we are called to believe, to trust that baptism is the moment when we take our first halting steps into the heavenly way of existence.

We are called to believe that baptism is the beginning of a heavenly way of being in our relationship with God and with one another.

In the Gospel today Jesus speaks of “this age” and the “coming age.” Baptism becomes the bridge between this age and the age to come.

In Paul’s letter to the Galatians he says:
“There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free,
nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

Baptism is meant to transform the relationship between husbands and wives, parents and children, black folks and white folks, rich and poor, old and young, straight and gay.

Those who embrace celibacy do it for the sake of the Kingdom. They become a reminder, a sacrament of the way heaven is.

Lots of dying must take place in order for that new kind of relating to take place.

In our first reading one of the brothers says:
“For it is for his laws that we are dying.”
Of course, as Christians, the ultimate law is the law of love.

Last week we celebrated the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens. Our new catechumen is David Wilder.
Part of that Rite is what’s called “the signing of the senses.”
A cross was traced on forehead, eyes, ears, lips, heart, shoulders, hands and feet.
The presider says:
“Receive the sign of the cross. It is Christ himself who now strengthens you with this sign of his love. Learn to know and follow him.”
In the second reading today St. Paul prays fervently:
“Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father,
who loved us and through grace gave us eternal comfort and good hope,
comfort your hearts and strengthen them in every good work and word.”

So we are privileged to enter into this life where what matters most
is that we have been sealed, Chrism-ed/Christ-ed, with the sign of Christ's love.
We are sent into the world to live the life of heavenly love.

At the end of our lives here
heaven will be an intensification
of a life we've already tasted on this side of it all.

There is a beautiful poem by the great Jesuit theologian Karl Rahner,
which touches on some of this quite powerfully:

“The great and sad mistake of many people ...
Is to imagine that those
Whom death has taken,
leave us.
They remain!
Where are they/
In the darkness?
Oh no!

It is we who are in the darkness. We do not see them,
but they see us.
Their eyes, radiant with glory
are fixed upon our eyes.
Oh, infinite consolation!
Though invisible to us,
our dead are not absent ....
They are living near us transfigured ...
Into light, into power, into love.

Jesus gathers us at this table again today to breathe his love into us.
May we line in the light of that love this week.