

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Easter + 14 April 2024 + Acts 3:13-15, 17-19 + I Jn 2:1-5 + Lk 24:35-48

Even though we will still be in the Easter season for another 5 weeks or so, this is the Last Sunday in which our Gospel will be explicitly about the resurrection of Christ from the dead. So I'd like to take this opportunity today to consider something that we probably don't think all that much about, but really should. And that is, as we profess in the Creed: *I look forward to the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.* We say this every Sunday, but what does it really mean?

Regarding our own resurrection from the dead, the Catechism offers answers to 4 natural questions. First, *what—what* exactly does it mean “to rise?” Well, we believe that the human person is a unity of body and soul. When we say someone has died, we are speaking of their body. Which is why, interestingly, even today when people speak of the dead, we don't say “the person in the casket,” but typically use words like ‘body,’ ‘corpse,’ or ‘mortal remains.’ But the soul is immortal, from the very moment of conception. The soul is judged immediately at the moment of death and receives its reward: purgatory and heaven, or hell. But the soul at death ‘waits,’ so to speak, for the end of time—when Christ comes again to judge the living and the dead—to be reunited with the body. Now, we are talking outside of time here, so we have to try to not think in terms of time, which admittedly is not easy.

So in order to understand what our resurrected bodies will be like, we must look to the resurrected body of our Lord in our Gospel today. As we noted last Sunday, Jesus appeared in the midst of the disciples, even though John explicitly states that the doors were locked. So Jesus' resurrected body is no longer bound by the physical limitations that our bodies are. And yet, it is a real, human body; He is not a ghost. He is the same Jesus as before His very real, human death. He says, *Look at my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me and see, because a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you can see I have.* Then, as if to remove any doubt, He eats a piece of fish in front of the disciples. So Christ's resurrected body matters for us, because as St. Paul writes in his Letter to the Philippians, *the Lord Jesus Christ...will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body* (3:21). The resurrected body is often referred to as a “spiritual body,” or a “glorious body”. And it means no more cancer. No more arthritis. No more pain. No wonder we say we “look forward to” it!

Next, *who?* Who will rise? Well, all the dead will rise. Then, as Jesus says in John ch.5, those who have done good will receive the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil the resurrection of judgment (cf. 5:29). Now, the big question: *how?* How is this possible? This is a tough one, and it has been difficult since the earliest days of the Church. Remember, St. Thomas refused to believe in the resurrection of Christ until he put his fingers in the Lord's nailmarks and his hand into the Lord's pierced side. St. Paul encountered this same disbelief among the early Christian Corinthians as well. Listen to what he says to them:

*Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? ... For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people the most to be pitied (cf. I Cor 15:12-19). St. Paul continues:*

*But someone will ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?" You foolish person! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. And what you sow is not the body that is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain...So is it with the resurrection of the dead...It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body...The first man (Adam) was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man (Christ) is from heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven (cf. I Cor 15:35-49). Just think of that: we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven—of Christ Himself! It's almost beyond comprehension.*

The last question: *when?* When will the resurrection of the body occur, when will time and the world as we know it end? Well, no one knows, only the Father. But the Catechism points out that in a certain sense, we already *have risen* with Christ. Listen to St. Paul's explanation to the Colossians—a text we often use at funerals: *If then you have been raised with Christ (in Baptism), seek the things that are above, where Christ is...not things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory (2:12-3:1).* In other words, the more we are united with Christ in *this life*, the more we are already walking with one foot in the resurrection—in heaven! So our ultimate focus, our goal, should be heaven!

Finally, 2 further applications. Sometimes people will ask, regarding the resurrection: what about cremations, those who drown, the unborn...I think you get the point. And the answer is that the resurrection is about glorified bodies, that we can hardly comprehend. So if God can create the immeasurable complexity of the human body out of "dust," meaning, the relatively few elements of the earth, He can certainly 'put us back together', so to speak.

And 2<sup>nd</sup> point is very important in our day. And that is, does our faith in the resurrection devalue the human body? Well, no, nothing could be farther from the truth! The human body is destined to be like Christ's, so that means even now it has immense dignity! This is something our world today has forgotten, where the body is worshipped then disregarded; and where modesty is a nearly extinct virtue. We'll conclude here with one more zinger from St. Paul: *do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own...you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body (I Cor 6:19).*