

Thursday of the Octave of Easter “The Resurrected Body”  
Fr. Frank Schuster  
April 16, 2020

This resurrection account from Luke’s Gospel is fascinating because it gives us a glimpse into what our resurrected bodies might be able to do. It says Jesus looked like a ghost, but he could be touched. This is similar to John’s Gospel where Jesus is able to walk through walls but could also invite Thomas to touch his wounds. To emphasize the point that Jesus was actually resurrected rather than appearing as a ghost, Jesus asks for something to eat and eats fish in front of them.

Body, soul, spirit, flesh, there is a stubbornness about our minds that wants to separate flesh away from spirit...but the resurrection accounts in all of the Gospels refuses to separate the body from the soul. To begin with, the tomb was empty. This means Jesus’ body resurrected. And when Jesus promises his disciples that our bodies will be resurrected too someday, it makes us want to ask a lot of questions beginning with...how does that exactly work? Obviously, we are talking about God’s power here so this should automatically makes these things possible, best not to overthink things...but the ramifications of not separating spirit from body makes us have to understand ourselves as not a duality of spirit and flesh, but rather see ourselves instead as enfleshed spirits. I think it was theologian Karl Rahner who talked about that.

However, we all know that there is a war constantly going on in that our souls are willing to follow Jesus but the flesh for some reason is extremely weak. Seeing ourselves as enfleshed spirits gives us a deeper insight into what original sin is really about and why we need salvation from it. St. Augustine talks a lot about that, concupiscent desire and such. However, I think there is also an invitation here to have a greater respect for the body in general, how we treat our bodies, other people’s bodies, and in how we honor a body after a person passes away.

From that person’s perspective, we can understand them as already resurrected corporally and before the judgment seat of God. From our perspective, locked in time as we are, things are of course different.

Nevertheless, we should obviously have a great reverence for the body after a person passes away and think twice about how we treat the remains of a loved one, specifically when it comes to burial rites. Even though there are circumstances when cremation makes sense and perhaps even the advisable thing to do, care must be taken that we don’t think of our bodies as trash to be burnt, or dust to be tossed, or a decoration for a bookcase. And contrary to a newfound movement in Washington State, our bodies are not compost needing recycling either. Bad, Bad, Bad. Our bodies are sacred and need to be treated as such. This is because when Jesus rose from the dead, the tomb was empty. And if we live as disciples of Jesus, our tombs will be empty too someday. That is our Easter hope. This hope has ramifications on how we live our lives today, particularly in how we view our bodies and the bodies of others as disciples of Jesus who has shown us the way.