

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

St. Paul tells us in the second reading:

If Christ is preached as raised from the dead, how can some among you say there is no resurrection of the dead? If the dead are not raised, neither has Christ been raised, and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is vain; you are still in your sins. Then those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are the most pitiable people of all.

But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

(I Corinthians 15:12, 16-20)

Some people in Corinth have been denying the resurrection of the body. They state that after we die, while there may be continued life, we will have “sloughed off” our bodies, and now our “spirits are free.” St. Paul is saying that this goes against everything that Christ came to do. If there is no resurrection of the body, then, he says, Christ was not resurrected... and so our faith would be in vain.

The resurrection is central to our faith in Jesus. In fact, it is the proof that Jesus was not just another prophet or teacher, but who He said He was – God! This is so important to remember – Jesus’ resurrection from the dead shows us that He has conquered death; death has no more power over us!

Today, people still struggle to believe in the resurrection of the body. Yet, this is one of the central tenants of our faith, even listed in the Apostles’ Creed. Many people today believe, like the Corinthians, that when we die, we will have continued existence, but without our bodies (and hence, people often erroneously say, we become angels). But this is not the truth of the matter. God has promised on the Last Day, at the Final Judgment, we will have resurrected bodies, reunited with our souls. We will become fully human.

What does this then mean for us? Our bodies are good... very good. I know, I know... sometimes we look in the mirror and we don’t think that at all. Yet, God has made our bodies good. In the beginning, God made us body and soul and said that it was “very good.” When Jesus came to redeem us, He came in a body. He died in the body. When He rose from the dead, He made sure to show His disciples that He was raised in the body: He ate fish with them, and let Thomas touch His hands and put his hand in His side.

St. John Paul II said

The body ... and only the body, is capable of making visible what is invisible: the spiritual and the divine. It has been created to transfer into the visible reality of the world the mystery hidden from eternity in God, and thus to be a sign of it. (*Theology of the Body 19:4*)

Our bodies matter. They point to the invisible reality of who we are (when you want to look at me, you *have* to look at my body... there’s nothing else at which to look!), and give us a hint of who God is (hence “Theology” of the body). This means that what we do in our bodies affects our souls, and our souls affects our bodies. We are embodied souls or ensouled bodies. To separate one from the other, from our very selves, is to leave us incomplete. We can see this when we hold on to anger. Anger is a “soul” event, yet it can adversely affect our bodies – causing hypertension, knotted muscles, and releasing toxins in the body, to name just a few effects. So also, our bodies affect our souls – when we choose physical sin, it hurts our souls. Whether it be sexual sin, gluttony, lying, or anything else, these physical sins can hurt or kill our souls. In part, this is why we do the “Catholic Aerobics” at Mass (standing, sitting, kneeling, Sign of the Cross, etc.), this is why we have Sacraments – because what we do in our bodies affects our souls.

God made us unique in creation – body and rational soul. Unlike the animals, we have a rational soul with intellect and free will. Unlike the Angels, we have a body. God’s plan for us it to be fully human – body and soul – in heaven forever. May we truly recognize this great grace, be grateful for His gift to us of our humanity, and work to keep holy all our choices in the body and soul.