

“The Resurrection of the body”

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What is this “resurrection of the body” which we profess a belief in? The word “resurrection” itself indicates that our bodies are not “recreated”, but are “resurrected”. By definition this would mean brought to life again with the same attributes which they had previously exhibited. We will physically recognize ourselves and others. The Catechism of the Catholic Church, paragraph 997, tells us that in death the soul separates from the body and goes to meet God. Our lifeless mortal body will then begin to decay and over time becomes the dust of the earth. This is the physical reality. How then can we say that our bodies will be resurrected? With God, all things are possible. After all, it is He who has created us and given us life to begin with. We believe in an all- powerful God and a supernatural reality beyond this physical existence we find ourselves in. But how do we *know* that this resurrection can and will take place? We know there can be physical life beyond death because Jesus himself was resurrected. He was physically present, wounds and all, to his apostles and to the many others he appeared to after his death. There were witnesses to his resurrection. Our faith itself depends on this. Thomas would not believe without seeing and touching, but Jesus responded “Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed”. (John 20:29) We are those blessed. We can believe the testimony of others without

seeing ourselves. And if we believe that a crucified Christ could return to a physical reality; to be seen by hundreds (1Cor 15:4-8); to share a meal with his apostles (Acts 10:40,41); to suddenly appear in their midst through closed doors, yet be physical to the touch (John 20:26-28), then we must believe that *our* physical life after death is certainly possible. Our belief that this resurrection of our bodies will definitely take place stems from the words of Sacred Scripture and the teaching of the Church. Over and over again this resurrection is spoken of in both the Old and New Testaments; “But your dead shall live, their corpses shall rise...” (Isaiah 26:19), “...the King of the world will raise us up to live again forever” (2Mac 7:9), “...For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised incorruptible...” (1Cor 15:52), “...He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also...” (Rom 8:11), “And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power.” (1Cor 6:14), “... becoming like him in his death, that if possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead” (Phil 3:10,11). The early Church Fathers gave witness to this belief as well; “The confidence of Christians is the resurrection of the dead; believing this we live” (Tertullian), “On no point does the Christian faith encounter more opposition than on the resurrection of the body” (St. Augustine), “...so too our bodies, which partake of the Eucharist, are no longer corruptible, but possess the hope of resurrection” (St. Irenaeus). The words of Christ himself are to the

point: “For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him should have eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:40). This verse, as well as others, also reveals when this resurrection will take place. On the “last day”. St. Paul tells us that when the Lord descends from heaven with a “cry of command”, the “archangel’s call” and the “sound of the trumpet of God” the “dead in Christ will rise first” (1Thes 4:16). But Paul also tells us that we will be changed. The flesh and blood bodies in which we now exist are “mortal” and “perishable” and “cannot inherit the kingdom of God”. At the resurrection on the last day, we will be clothed with immortality and inherit the imperishable. Our bodies will be perfect and we will be “raised in glory...raised a spiritual body”. We shall “...bear the image of the man of heaven!” (1Cor 15:42-53) As God’s life and grace now flows into our souls through our mortal bodies in the Sacraments, how much more will our immortal, glorified bodies enable us to be clothed with Christ and fully experience our unity with him for an eternity in heaven! Thanks be to God for this amazing hope beyond our wildest imaginings!

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SACRED SCRIPTURE



"If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit which dwells in you." (Rom8:11)

"...knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence." (2Cor4:14)

"How can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised; if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. . . ." (1Cor15:12-14)

"he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day." (John6:54)

"...The body is not meant for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power." (1Cor6:13,14)

" So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body... Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven. I tell you this, brethren: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

Lo! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable nature must put on the imperishable, and this mortal nature must put on immortality. " (1Cor15:42-53)

SACRED TRADITION

"To rise with Christ, we must die with Christ: we must 'be away from the body and at home with the Lord.' (2Cor5:8) In that "departure" which is death the soul is separated from the body. It will be reunited with the body on the day of resurrection of the dead. (CCC 1005)

"In expectation of that day, the believer's body and soul already participate in the dignity of belonging to Christ. This dignity entails the demand that he should treat with respect his own body, but also the body of every other person, especially the suffering." (CCC 1004)

"The flesh is the hinge of salvation" (Tertullian). We believe in God who is creator of the flesh; we

believe in the Word made flesh in order to redeem the flesh; we believe in the resurrection of the flesh, the fulfillment of both the creation and the redemption of the flesh. (CCC 1015)

"Just as bread that comes from the earth, after God's blessing has been invoked upon it, is no longer ordinary bread, but Eucharist, formed of two things, the one earthly and the other heavenly: so too our bodies, which partake of the Eucharist, are no longer corruptible, but possess the hope of resurrection." (St. Irenaeus)

"All men must rise again with the same bodies with which they were united in the present life." (St. Athanasius)

THOUGHTFUL QUESTIONS

- **Does my belief in the resurrection of the body effect the way I respect and care for my body here on earth?**
- **In Baptism, we die and are raised to new life in Jesus. Am I living out my baptism in a way that will prepare me for my final death and resurrection?**