

I Believe in the Resurrection of the Body

It was a rather routine burial service at the cemetery. The mourners were blotting their eyes with tear-laden handkerchiefs as they gathered around the casket perched above the freshly excavated grave, while I, with head buried behind the safety of the ritual book, prayed, “We commend the body of our brother to the earth from which it was made. Although our bodies lie in the depths of the earth we believe that they, like you, will rise again on the last day. . . Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord. . .”

After my dutiful recitation of the grave side prayers, the mourners made their way back to the cars, one by one. The granddaughter of the deceased, a child of about six, remained behind. When her mother went to take her by the hand and bring her to the waiting limousine, the daughter looked up at me and, pointing at the casket, asked, “What’s going to happen to my grandpa?”

“Well, grandpa is in heaven right now,” I quickly answered.

She said, “But I saw him in that casket this morning. When did he go to heaven?”

I tried to explain, “His *soul* went to heaven. That’s just his body. Where grandpa is now he doesn’t need his body any more.”

“But you just said that his body was going to rise again on the last day. How will his body get out of that box?”

“Well,” I said, “it’s not going to be *this* body. Someday God is going to give him a brand new body that won’t ever get old or sick or tired.”

Standing there in deep thought for several moments, the girl finally asked, “But why does my grandpa have to wait? Why can’t God give him that body now?”

There have been many times in my priesthood where the simple and straightforward questions of a child will make me stop and try to understand what it is that we profess in our creed. “I believe in the resurrection of the body.” That simple statement from the creed really represents a complex synthesis of ideas that arise from the various cultures from which Christianity has arisen. From Platonic world of the Greeks we have inherited our belief in an immortal soul, a principal of being which is both incorruptible and distinct from the body in which it is “imprisoned” during the course of this particular lifetime. From the Pharisaic branch of Judaism we have received our understanding of the general resurrection at the end of time. And from the heart of the Christian mystery, we have come to believe that the resurrection of Christ provides the pattern for all humanity;

that as his body was raised from the dead, so too we shall also share in a like resurrection. “He will change our lowly body to conform with his glorified body by the power that enables him also to bring all things into subjection to himself.” (*Philippians 3:21*)

Synthesizing all these various strands, our tradition teaches that, at the time of death, the soul leaves the body, and undergoes a particular judgment. The souls of the just go directly to heaven, the souls of the damned go to their eternal punishment, and those souls who are yet in need of further purification go to a “place” called purgatory. Then, at the end of the world, there will be the general judgment. Our souls will be reunited with our bodies and we will find ourselves either in eternal happiness in heaven or eternal damnation in hell.

Our theology has put together a system or a synthesis that upholds the immortality of the soul, the general resurrection at the end of time and the pattern of bodily resurrection which was manifest in the resurrection of Christ. Having said all that, we can still find ourselves perplexed by the questions of a six-year-old girl who asks, “But why does God have to wait till the last day? Why can’t he give him that body now?” So, let us go to the heart of the question: what exactly do we mean when we profess, “I believe in the resurrection of the body”?

The first truth that seems quite obvious, but still needs stating none the less, is that our belief in the resurrection is not just belief in the resuscitation of a corpse. The resurrection of Jesus is to provide us with a model of understanding our own bodily resurrection; as the encounters with the risen Lord are described in the scriptures, it is apparent that the gospel writers were aware of the tradition that the risen body of Jesus was not just his resuscitated corpse. The gospel writers, in struggling to find a language that would describe this eschatological reality, try to show that the risen body of Jesus was not subject to the limitations of space and time as was his earthly body. Other elements of dissimilarity between the earthly body of Jesus and his risen body can be seen in the fact that the risen Jesus is not immediately recognized by even his closest disciples. Even Mary Magdalene thinks she is encountering the gardener by the empty tomb. Again, human language is limited in trying to describe a reality which no one has ever experienced before.

In a similar way, St. Paul in his letter to the Corinthians responds to this question concerning the nature of the risen body. “Someone may say, 'How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come back?' It (the body) is sown corruptible; it is raised incorruptible. It is sown dishonorable; it is raised glorious. It is sown weak; it is raised powerful. It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body.” (*1 Corinthians 15: 35, 42-44a*)

We know, then what this resurrected body is not. But what actually are we saying in our belief in the resurrection of the body. What is a spiritual body like? Why is it that we cannot receive this “spiritual body” immediately upon our death? Why do we have to wait until the last day? What kind of a life does a “disembodied soul” have anyway?

I believe to grasp the full meaning of what is professed in the creed, we need to understand how the concept of “body” was understood by Jewish people as well as by the Greeks who tried to “translate” this concept into their own language. However, before we enter into the understanding of ancient cultures, it might be best for us to first put to question our own concept of the body. What do **we** mean when **we** use the word “body”? I think that the most operative model that governs our popular understanding of this word is the concept of a large complex machine, such as a crane. The crane is an instrument that is governed by the operator at the helm with all of the levers and throttles at his or her command. The crane does what the operator tells the crane to do. But there is a clear distinction between operator and crane. In a similar manner, most of us look at our bodies as animated by the soul or the mind. This principle of animation governs the working of the body. When the body breaks down irreparably, the soul leaves the body for it no longer has any use for it. Even our language of possession most aptly fits this understanding of a body -- I *have* a body or I have no further need of a body. In any case, the “I” (crane operator) is distinct from the body (the crane) which is owned and used and eventually discarded.

In this century, existentialist and personalist philosophy has brought this popular understanding of the body under critical reexamination. Gabriel Marcel in particular speaks about the body as not something which *I have* but something which *I am*. I am constituted by my experiences and relationships, all of which are mediated through the body. In this life, we communicate, exchange ideas, offer expressions of love and affection, nurture and are nurtured through the body. The body is more than the machine which is operated by the mind or soul. It is the sacrament of the self, the very expression of our unique individuation without which the self cannot be a *self*. The body not only is the outer manifestation of my self, but “I” am shaped through my body and all the interactions with others that come to me through the body.

While our bodies are the unique expression of our self-individuation, they also possess a history. Certainly our genetic code ties this body to a history that spans backwards in time, even to an era before our species existed. Furthermore, our bodies have received the imprint of our family’s accumulated likes and dislikes, inclinations and prejudices. Not only does our body carry a past, in some way it casts a shadow over the future as it leaves its mark in this world, a psychic footprint which impacts the lives of future generations. More than just a machine employed by the mind/soul for a specific duration in time, my body is a locus where past and future intersect.

As our bodies are connected to past and future, our bodies are also connected to all that exists in the present. Quite simply, my body's use of the resources of the planet constantly changes the shape of the planet -- this world has to make room for my body. Knowing the world population, we might think that one person, more or less, makes little difference in the big picture of things. And yet, we are all swept away by the premise of the movie *It's A Wonderful Life* where, in short, we see dramatically how if one particular person were never to have been born (George Bailey), the world would be quite different.

In summary, then, our bodies are a place of connection – connection with the past and the future, connection with all that is in the present moment. Amazingly, this existentialist-personalist philosophy concerning the body is very consonant with the Biblical understanding of the body. The Hebrew people did not have a word for “body”; rather, the word “flesh” stood for all that we mean by the word body. In their anthropology, we are composed of flesh (*basar*) made from the earth into which God breathes his spirit (*ruah*). Flesh, however, meant more than just a collection of tissue or organs. Flesh is the “stuff” that bonded you to the rest of creation and to other human beings. Remember the story in Genesis as God presents Eve to Adam. Adam rejoices and says, “This at last is bone from my bone and flesh from my flesh.” The vision and dream that God has for all married couples is that they become “one flesh,” a reality to which Jesus refers when questioned about the indissolubility of marriage (cf. Matthew 19:5)

In the Hebrew culture, the word “flesh” comes to designate the kinship that exists between members of the same tribe. In the Joseph story, when Joseph is about to be abandoned in the well by his brothers, Judah says to his brothers: “What is to be gained by killing our brother and concealing his blood? Rather, let us sell him to these Ishmaelites, instead of doing away with him ourselves. After all, he is our brother, our own flesh.” (*Genesis 37:26-27*) Likewise, when King David is to be anointed King in Hebron, all the tribes of Israel go before him and say, “Here we are, your bone and your flesh.” (*2 Samuel 5:1*). And so, flesh came to mean all the relationships and experiences that constitute the self – all the collective experiences that shape us as individuals.

The Jewish people only had the word *basar* - flesh - to describe that aspect of our earthly existence which we have in common with all of creation. The Greeks, however, had two words describing our earthly existence: *sarx* (flesh) as well as the word *soma* (body). What was the difference between these words and how did they come to be used in the theological vision of the human person?

As the New Testament authors used these words, *sarx* (flesh) had a very negative connotation. It described that part of our personality which was subject to corruption and is contrary to the vision and will of God. “The concern of the flesh is negativity toward God.” (*Romans 8:7*) As St. Paul writes, “Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of

God.” (*1 Corinthians 15:50*) In Romans, Paul will say, “I know that good does not dwell in me, that is, in my flesh.” (*Romans 7:18*)

The word *soma* (body), on the other hand, was a word which was much closer in connotation to the Hebrew word “flesh.” *Soma* stood for the entire person seen from the perspective of one destined for and created for relationship. Perhaps the best analogical equivalent in the English language is the word heart. By heart we mean more than just the fist-sized organ that pumps blood through the body; we mean the seat of relationships, the history of loves and hurts, joys and disappointments that come through relationships. In all our poetry and love songs, the word heart has come to mean the place where we hope and dream for fulfillment. In a similar way, *soma* meant more than just the collection of tissues and cells, but pointed toward an understanding of the human person in its potential to be in relationship. We find this understanding of body at work in Paul’s discussion with the Corinthians concerning the immorality of fornication. He states, “Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take Christ’s members and make them the members of a prostitute? Of course not! Or do you not know that anyone who joins himself to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For “the two,” it says, ‘will become one flesh.’ Whoever is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with Him.” (*1 Corinthians 6:15-17*)

Just as the heart can be misled and the true desires of the heart be subverted, so too, in the Biblical understanding, can our body live under the rule of flesh and not achieve its true destiny. When we were born, we were born with a “fleshly body,” the body of Adam, destined for corruption, death and decay. The process of salvation, for the Christian, is to put this fleshly body to death so that we can live under a new principle, namely life in the spirit. When we live according to the flesh, we are destined for death. On the other hand, when we live according to the Spirit, we are destined for life and peace.

The possibility of living in the spirit, to be freed from the encumbrances of sin-affected flesh, is kerygmatically captured in the announcement, “The Kingdom of God is at hand.” The Kingdom represents God’s love intention for humanity – namely, that we can live in loving union and communion with Him and with others. Living according to the principals of the Kingdom means that I do not live to serve the needs of my own ego, but seek to make myself available for the community of mankind who are of my flesh and blood. The ministry of Jesus was not only to proclaim the future coming of the Kingdom but to inaugurate that Kingdom in the present age by means of the miracles he performed in the course of his public ministry. In the miracles of Jesus, we see the power of the spirit liberating others and freeing them from the obstacles that would prevent them from achieving their fullest human potential. The gospels record the many instances where Jesus brought about this liberation in the lives of the people he touched: the blind see, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the mute speak, and the dead are raised to

life. Because of our own dualistic thinking, dividing the person into body and soul, placing a higher value upon the soul, we might tend to see these miracles that affect the body as less important than the spiritual message which brings life to the soul. But clearly, such a dualism did not exist in Jesus' mind. Body and soul are one reality. Encumbrances that affect the body affect the soul and vice versa. For this reason, Jesus cures the paralytic and forgives his sin. He brings about the cure of the man by the pool of Bethesda who had been sitting there for thirty-eight years and then enjoins him to avoid sin lest something worse befall him. Even the more common physical handicaps are ascribed to a kind of demonic possession (a person who has a mute spirit). The process of liberation, in short, is a liberation of the whole person -- body, mind and spirit.

The ultimate liberation, the ultimate sign of the presence of the Kingdom is the resurrection of Jesus. Death has been conquered and the human potential for a new kind of existence is revealed to us. Again, when we look at the resurrected body of Jesus as the pattern of our own bodily resurrection, we may tend to focus on some of the more paranormal qualities of the resurrected body. Jesus is able to walk through locked doors, he is able to appear to the disciples at Emmaus and immediately disappear, he obviously will not get sick or die again. As we focus on some of these more superficial characteristics, we might fantasize what our own resurrected bodies will be like – not subject to limitation, not subject to illness, able to consume all the foods forbidden in fat-restricted diets on this side of the vale of tears, etc. However, the glorified body of Jesus does not merely point to a kind of “super body” (able to leap tall buildings in a single bound). Rather, the glorified body of Jesus points to the ultimate reality for which our bodies were made – namely, relationship. And so the risen Jesus says that he is with us always, even until the end of time. The glorified body of Christ is made available to us sacramentally; baptized into his body, we are nourished by that body in the Eucharist. It is the desire of Jesus, indeed the desire of the Father through Jesus, that in his body we may all be one. In the final priestly prayer of Jesus in John 17, our Lord prays, “I pray not only for them, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, so that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me. And I have given them the glory you gave me, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may be brought to perfection as one, that the world may know that you sent me, and that you loved them even as you loved me.” (*John 17: 20-23*)

The Kingdom of God is at hand, infallibly ratified and made real for us in the event of Christ's resurrection, and to be finally consummated in the end time, at the end of all time, in the resurrection of our own body. Our bodily resurrection, therefore, is the final consummation of a process that has already begun when we have made a decision to become incorporated into the Body of Christ. Our salvation, our liberation, the glorification of our bodily existence, is a process that begins with baptism. St. Paul

obviously has this vision of baptism in mind when he writes the beginning of chapter 6 to the Romans. In baptism (and here Paul has in mind the baptism of adult converts), there is the conscious decision to die to selfishness and sin. We put to death our fleshly (*sarx*) existence. We have died with Christ. We are now rising to a new, more spiritual reality. Hear again these words from Paul's letter to the Romans: "Are you unaware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life. For if we have grown into union with him through a death like his, we shall also be united with him in the resurrection. We know that our old self was crucified with him, so that our sinful body might be done away with, that we might no longer be in slavery to sin. If, then, we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him." (*Romans 6:2-8*)

The resurrection of the body, therefore, is not just a moment in time (or at the end of time) but a *process* that begins with our conversion (sacramentalized in Baptism) and made fully complete at the end of time. Again, the word body means more than the collection of organic tissue – but it refers to the “self” as created for relationship. The resurrection of the body then is a process of dying to our self-centered concerns so that we may be free to respond to our truest calling which is find our fulfillment and wholeness in relationship. The resurrection of the body is the reconstitution of our selves as we were intended to be from our creation. In so far as we live in union with the Body of Christ, we are already living according to that will-intention of the Father.

The resurrection of the body is a process, therefore, of moving from self-centered exclusivity to all embracing inclusivity. The “bodies of flesh” which we have in this earthly plane destine us for a life of particularity – we see and experience reality from a particular point of view. Our fleshly existence entraps us in this particularity. I experience reality as a white male, and already I have spoken volumes as to how I will see and judge reality! When I exalt the particularity of my viewpoint (and even subject others to see things the way I see them), then I do violence to the world. The horrors of the Holocaust are the sad but inevitable consequence of so venerating the particularity of one such viewpoint (the Arian culture). I begin to become the arbiter of what is right and what is wrong. In short, I have eaten the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and have arrogantly proclaimed myself as the sole judge of reality.

We are born with this tendency of venerating the particularity of our limited viewpoint. This is what it means to be born with original sin, the sin of Adam, the myopia that will lead to death and destruction. Salvation comes from being **incorporated** into a Body that is more expansive, open to relationship. In my baptism, I have become joined to the risen Body of Christ; I have been incorporated into a body, a viewpoint, that is far more universal. In Christ I see myself as a child of the Father. With Christ I am now in

relationship with all of humanity. “For through faith you are all children of God in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” (*Galatians 3:26-28*)

In the reception of the Eucharist, I am united with the glorified risen body of Christ. I am caught up in a “kingdom moment,” a moment where there are no divisions created by the sinful arrogance that comes from earthly pride. This sentiment is most beautifully expressed in the end of the second Eucharistic prayer for Masses of Reconciliation. “Fill us with his Spirit through our sharing in this meal. May he take away all that divides us. May this Spirit keep us always in communion with our Pope, our bishop, with all bishops and with all your people. Father, make your Church throughout the world a sign of unity and an instrument of peace. You have gathered us here around the table of your Son, in fellowship with the Virgin Mary, Mother of God, and all the saints. In that new world where the fullness of your peace will be revealed, gather people of every race, language and way of life to share in the one eternal banquet with Jesus Christ the Lord.” Our celebration of the Eucharist is a foretaste of that heavenly moment when all will be one.

Our physical death, that is, the irrevocable end to our limited, fleshly existence, is a very real step in the process of our transformation toward an existence that can be more inclusive. I no longer have the shackles that comes with the particularity of this fleshly existence. It is not just the fact that I am freed from the impoverishment of sickness and disease, I am now free to experience life from a higher viewpoint. Sometimes people have asked me if their deceased loved one “sees” them, and, if so, do they see all our “dirty laundry”, our misdeeds, our deep dark dirty secrets? It seems to me that our loved ones (by virtue of love itself) are in an eternal relationship with us which death does not sever. And so they are aware of us, and all our deeds, good or bad. However, the diminishing labels “good and bad” come from our own limited viewpoint (and the consequence of original sin and the eating of the fruit of that tree of knowledge). Freed from that viewpoint, they see us with the compassionate love of God, caught up in a viewpoint and an understanding that surpasses our own limited knowledge and critical judgment.

All along, we have maintained that this process of transformation will culminate in the end times. Why does our tradition see this process as “dragging on” until the end of time? Why do we believe that our deceased loved ones need to wait until the “last day” before they experience the fullness of resurrection? Our deceased loved ones are connected to us here on earth, and so they obviously long for our full liberation, when we too will be freed from the “corruption of sin and death.” Therefore, we are led to the conclusion that there is something incomplete about heaven. This does not mean that there isn’t beatitude in the next life – there can be beatitude without the total fullness that will only come when all of creation is liberated from this “fleshly” existence. In a dramatic way, the

following passage from Revelation speaks about that longing experienced by the souls of the just as they await the full revelation of God's Kingdom.

When he broke open the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slaughtered because of the witness they bore to the word of God. They cried out in a loud voice, "How long will it be, holy and true master, before you sit in judgment and avenge our blood on the inhabitants of the earth?" Each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to be patient a little while longer until the number was filled of their fellow servants and brothers who were going to be killed as they had been. (*Revelation 6:9-11*)

So now back to our final question: why is the creedal truth of the resurrection of the body linked to the *final* days of the consummation of the world? From what we have seen, the Kingdom, established in its fulness, is that day when the vision of God for *all* humanity will be brought to completion. There will no longer exist the divisions which we create through our own limited understandings and narrow viewpoints. The Body of Christ, the reality already anticipated through Baptism and through the ongoing incorporation into the church through Eucharist, will be brought to an absolute fullness in the end of time. It is this vision that inspires Paul's writing to the Corinthians: "Then comes the end, when Christ hands over the kingdom to his God and Father, when he has destroyed every sovereignty and every authority and power. . . . When everything is subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to the one who subjected everything to him, so that God may be all in all." (*1 Corinthians 15: 20-28*)

Furthermore, in this state of resurrection, I will be in relationship with all. All my human relationships, which on earth were tainted because of selfishness and self-absorption, are now purified. I can receive and be received into the hearts of all. I can enjoy all the relationships that I was created to enjoy – and there will be no complications. The resurrected body, therefore, means a body that can be in total, unreserved intimacy with **all**. This fullness can only take place at the end of time when all humanity will be freed from the particularist viewpoints that come from our flesh-encumbered existence.

As an aside, consider the one time in the gospels that Jesus is questioned about the resurrection from the dead. The Sadducees present this rather ridiculous situation of a woman whose husband dies without leaving her a child and so she, under the Levirate law, marries the man's brother who likewise dies without leaving any progeny. The situation so continues until all seven brothers die. Jesus then is asked the question: "In the resurrection, whose wife will she be?" Jesus answers, "At the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage but are like the angels in heaven." (*Matthew 22:30*) The full import of this passage may be grasped by what we have thus far seen. It is not that there is no *relationship* in heaven. Relationship is all that there is. But the deep intimacy of marriage, enjoyed exclusively between two people, is now to be enjoyed by

everyone with everyone in the Kingdom. The covenant (or contract) of marriage relationships will be replaced by a more immediate oneness that will be freed from all the encumbrances of human selfishness (which makes the making of covenants necessary in this world). In the end, the priestly prayer of Jesus in John 17 will be fulfilled: “that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may be brought to perfection as one, that the world may know that you sent me, and that you loved them even as you loved me.” (*John 17:22-23*)

We finally come to ask the question concerning the nature of our existence after the death of the physical body. Obviously, what I offer here is purely speculative. Describing an existence that is beyond the limitations of space and time is like trying to describe the color red to one born blind. What is the nature of the spiritual body we receive? Does the “soul” have an existence apart from this spiritual body as we await the last day? Perhaps it might be helpful to move beyond categories such as “body” “spirit” “Soul” and focus on categories involving relationship.

After the death of the physical body, I am in relationship with those whom I have left behind as well as those who have preceded me. As we have seen, the word “body” describes ourselves under this particular aspect of our existence – that we are made for and constituted by our relationships with others. So, in a sense, one can speak of a “bodily” existence immediately after death. Again, by the word “body” we do not mean material (subject to decay) – but something which makes me identifiably **me**. The body is the seat of our individuality; it is the means through which we are identified and also linked to others. However, there is an incompleteness to this existence insofar as we are in relationship with those who have yet to experience the liberation that comes through the death of our fleshly existence. Those who share life with the risen Christ still share *his* longing for that day when all shall be one.

Perhaps the question might be raised: what is the uniqueness of the resurrection of Christ? If our existence in the next life can be thought of in terms of a bodily existence, is there anything unique about what happened to Christ in the moment of his resurrection? The scriptures speak of Christ in his resurrection as the “firstfruits” of those who have fallen asleep. As children of Adam, we experience the death of our fleshly existence; because we have been incorporated into Christ, we experience a new kind of existence, one that is freed from the tensions of selfishness and sin. As we have seen, this transformation of our “old” self begins in Baptism, is brought to a fuller level in our personal death and will find its fullest consummation at the end of time. The uniqueness of the resurrection of Christ is that his rising was the first in the history of mankind, bringing us the vision of our glorified relational being that will exist for everyone at the end of all time. In his risen Body, the Kingdom (and all the possibilities that exist in this God-vision for all humanity) is made most fully manifest to us. In addition, we affirm the uniqueness of Christ’s *bodily*

resurrection in that his body, free from the encumbrances of sin, would not be subject to material decay. Our mortal bodies, on the other hand, will decay in the earth since they are the remnants of a sin-affected means of relating to reality. Freed from the sin-affected body, we then can be open to deeper more personal relationships in this new world.

But, what about those who have died before Christ? If Christ is the beginning, the head of a new humanity, what happened to those who died before Christ? What kind of an existence did they have after death? Our tradition has spoken of a “place” (Sheol, Hades, the realm of the Dead) into which these people were consigned after their earthly existence. We affirm that Christ entered this realm immediately after his death. “He descended into Hell” we say in the creed. The consequence of the sin of Adam is death – not just the cessation of our earthly existence, but the real meaning of death which is absence of relationship. The consequence of the sin of Adam, the consequence of being slaves to our limited viewpoint, is that we are isolated, cut off from the rest of humanity and from God himself. While we were created for relationship (in the image of the Triune God who, in his very nature, IS relationship), death brings us into a state of non-existence, the absence of all relationship. The realm of the dead (Sheol, Hades) could be seen as a “place” where those who had died were cut off from communion with God and with others. In his resurrected state, Christ was able to bring the Spirit of adoption to those who had otherwise been cut off from life, bringing them into a state of union with Him. The longing for this new life is already foreshadowed in the words of Job: “But as for me, I know that my redeemer lives, and that he will at last stand forth upon the dust; whom I myself shall see: my own eyes, not another's, shall behold him. And from my flesh I shall see God; my inmost being is consumed with longing.” (*Job 19:25-26*)

In this last situation, we have mentioned that power which has not been spoken of until now – the power of the Spirit. The spirit of God is the power of God that brings us into relationship with him – that creative energy of God that brings order out of chaos and life out of death. This very life of God which is the principle of unity within the Triune Godhead is that power that embraces us into the community who is God. The Spirit is breathed into us in our baptism which now begins the process of our transformation from our earthly bodies, our bodies of flesh, to our spiritual bodies, a body that lives in the spirit of adoption by which we cry out Abba, that is father. Paul continually makes the dichotomy between life in the flesh (as children of Adam) and life in the spirit. Through the power of Christ’s resurrection, that life-giving Spirit is now unleashed so that we can be reconstituted, indeed born again.

In summary, the doctrine of the resurrection of the body points to a reality that is richer and deeper than merely asserting the immortality of the self. In this doctrine we come to appreciate our highest destiny, namely, the transformation of the relational self (the body). In this process begun through the grace of conversion, self-absorption and the

limited perspective of our self-encapsulated viewpoints (the result of original sin) can gradually give way to a Spirit-filled life where we are capable of embracing all. The very fact that we speak of a *bodily* resurrection points toward a continuity between our experiences of this world and the experiences which we long for in a future world. The relationships that constitute our “bodies” in this life will someday be transformed, purified of their distortions and freed from the limitations of human brokenness. In this doctrine, we are oriented toward a hope that our future is a future of fulfilled relationship, and that all the glimpses of heaven which I experience here on earth will some day be brought to an absolute fulness. The resurrection of the body expresses our faith that we who have been created for intimacy will someday find our deepest fulfillment in that everlasting communion where all shall become one.