

Homily – Fr. Brad Neely
2nd Sunday of Easter – Divine Mercy
Sunday

Sts Peter and Paul – Nezperce: May 01, 2011

Acts 4: 32-35; 1Jn 5: 1-6; Jn 20: 19-31

The Apostle Thomas, in the Gospel today, only believes Christ has bodily risen from the grave, only when he can *see* and *touch* Jesus. He didn't know at the time how privileged he was to have this experience.

In this scene Christ lets his Apostles know that what is more pleasing to God is believing in the Risen Lord *without* having seen and touched.

After the external signs of the physical Jesus on earth, we forever after *in this world*, depend on the witness of the witnesses who had seen, touched, and believed in Christ risen from the dead. These witness accounts are safeguarded by the Church, who is guided by God's Holy Spirit. Christ rose, *bodily*, from the dead, Christ ascended *bodily* into heaven. Jesus ushered in new glorious life following death, and it **has something to do with the human body**.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches us:

"Christ is raised *with his own body*. . . . but he did not return to an earthly life. So, **in Him**, by virtue of our entry into His life

we were baptized---
[we] "will rise again
with [our] own bodies"--- [999],
but not again to an earthly life.

St. Paul reiterates this

in his letters to the Philippians and Corinthians---
that Christ will change *our* lowly body *to be like* His glorious body.

The Catechism goes on to say that:
"....*our* participation in the Eucharist already gives us a foretaste of Christ's transfiguration of our bodies. . . ."
[1000]

At Mass---after the invocation of the Holy Spirit upon earthly bread---that earthly bread becomes "heavenly."
". . . .so too, [do] our [earthly] bodies. [As we] partake of the Eucharist--- [we] are no longer corruptible, but possess the hope of resurrection."
". . . .[So] by virtue of the Holy Spirit, Christian life is *already*---on earth--- a participation in the death and resurrection of Christ." [1002]

So, when St. Thomas wanted physical proof of Christ's resurrection, it was proof of the *physical body of Christ* but not Christ returned to earthly life, rather, transformed into glorified life, and anticipating ascension to heavenly life.

We know that God created angels.
We know that angels have no bodies.
So, we have, again, a beautiful mystery of God.
We were created with spirits--souls that animate a physical body.
God desired it.

By God creating us with physical bodies, and becoming part of His own creation in taking human flesh, tells us a lot about the great dignity in human life.

The Catechism flushes out many facets of this dignity:
God created us, male and female, "in the image of God,"

“uniting the spiritual and material worlds.
[355]

We are "able to know and love [our] creator.”

We are willed for [our] own sake.”

We are called to share. . .in God's own life---

These truths are the fundamental reasons for [our] dignity: [356]

Even the material world seeks its own highest perfection, and can raise its voice in praise to the Creator.

How much more can we!

For this reason, the Catechism tells us,

we ***may not despise our bodily lives.***

Rather, we are obligated to regard our bodies as good

and to hold them in honor

since God has created them

and will raise them up on the last day. [364]

God created everything for [us].

We, in turn [were] created

to serve and love God,

and to offer all creation back to Him,

including ourselves, body and soul.

As we continue on in time,

I will be incorporating Pope John Paul II's

“Theology of the Body”

as we break open Scripture

in the midst of Mass.

'Theology of the Body' is Pope John Paul II's

integrated vision of the human person –

body, soul, and spirit.

JPII tells us that the physical human body

has a specific meaning

and is capable of revealing answers

regarding fundamental questions

about us and our lives.

Such as:

- Is there a real purpose to life and if so, what is it?
- Why were we created male and female?
- Does it really matter if we are one or the other?

- What does the marital union of a man and woman
- have to say about God's plan for our lives?
- What is the purpose of the married and celibate vocations?
- What exactly is "Love"?

Between 1979 and 1984,

Pope John Paul II delivered 129 Wednesday audiences

on this very topic.

He discussed who [we were as humans] in the beginning,

who [we are as humans] after original sin,

and who [we as humans] will be

in the ages to come.

John Paul's message was given

to help us live in preparation

for the Kingdom of Heaven.

It challenges us to live in a manner worthy

of our great dignity as human persons.

It is a message of hope for all ages,

and sums up the true meaning of the human

person

revealed to us by God in Jesus.

God has given us everything we need---

that, unlike Thomas,

even though we may ***not see***, we may ***still believe.***

Jesus, God made flesh,

who lived, died, rose from the dead,

and ascended bodily into heaven,

where He wishes us to join Him,

reveals to us our own destiny

should we choose to follow it.