

Resurrection of the Body

Thy dead shall live, their bodies shall rise. O dwellers in the dust, awake and sing for joy!
~ Isaiah 26:19

IN THE APOSTLES' CREED, we profess: "I believe ... in the resurrection of the body." We say that we believe our physical body will be reunited with our soul in eternity.

We are well aware of the Resurrection of Jesus on Easter morn (see handout on Resurrection). But from its earliest years, the Church has taught that our mortal bodies, which grow stiff and cold in death and become corrupt in the grave or ashes in the furnace, will, like Jesus' body, be brought again to life.

Even before Jesus' coming, there was a growing understanding that, because we are both body and soul, our bodies must eventually share eternity with the soul: "God created man for incorruption, and made him in the image of his own eternity" (Wis 2:23). The Pharisees who were Jesus' contemporaries believed in the resurrection of the body (see Acts 23:8). Jesus often spoke of his own Resurrection (see Mt 12:39-40; Mk 8:31; Mk 9:31) and promised resurrection for us as well. "I am the resurrection and the life" (Jn 11:25), Jesus tells us, "for this is the will of my Father; that every one who sees the Son and believes in him should

have eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day" (Jn 6:40).

As in the Eucharist, when bread and wine by the words of Christ spoken by the priest are made into his Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity, so we who partake of the Eucharist, by the word of our Risen Savior, will some day receive back our bodies, glorified and made fit to dwell forever in Heaven: "[H]e who

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eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day" (Jn 6:54). Nourished with Jesus' precious body and blood in

the Holy Eucharist, on the last day we "will appear with him in glory" (Col 3:4). If we have lived and died in righteousness, we will in soul and body be resplendent, as our Risen Lord is resplendent in Heaven (see Rv 1:13-16), a foreshadowing of which the apostles saw on Mount Tabor, where they were dazzled by the splendor of Jesus' body when "he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his garments became white as light" (see Mt 17:2).

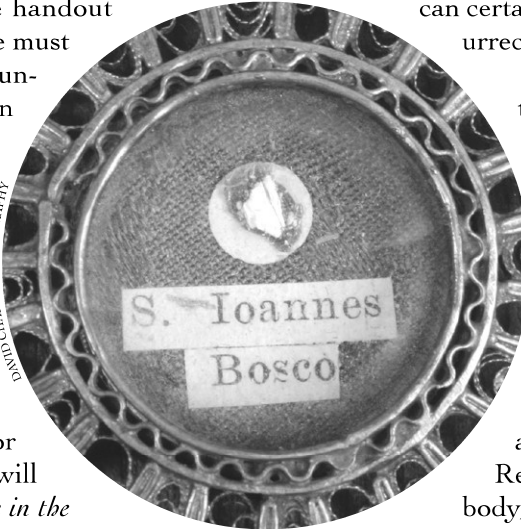
Our souls, at the moment of death, are taken into eternity at



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the Particular Judgment (see handout on The Four Last Things). We must await our bodily resurrection until Jesus' Second Coming, when *"the Lord himself will descend from Heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel's call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise"* (1 Thes 4:16). Then our bodies will be glorified, no longer corruptible; Christ *"will change our lowly body to be like his glorious body"* (Phil 3:21; see also 1 Cor 15:44). Yet not only the just will be resurrected; for *"all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come forth, those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment"* (Jn 5:28-29). Our bodies will rise and be made incorruptible, and be reunited to our souls forever, in splendor if we have been good or to judgment and Hell if we have done evil and spurned God (see also Mt 16:27; Rom 2:6-8).

Throughout history, there have been those who question this amazing truth, asking, "How can a body so obviously mortal and so readily corruptible be raised to life again in everlasting life?" Faith in him who is "the Resurrection and the Life" is needed, and as St. Paul emphatically teaches us, faith in Jesus' Resurrection necessarily requires faith that we, too, will be raised: *"Now if Christ is preached as raised from the dead, 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. We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified of God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised. If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men most to be pitied. But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep"* (1 Cor 15:12-20). If Christ himself could rise from the dead, he



A small fragment of bone of St. John Bosco, patron of youth: the Church holds in great respect the mortal remains of people of remarkable holiness

can certainly, by his almighty power, resurrect us as well.

And just as Jesus gave the apostles a glimpse into eternity even before his Resurrection by his Transfiguration, we too gain a bodily participation in Heaven when we *"were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life"* (Rom 6:4). We already share in Jesus' glorious Resurrection as members of his body, as St. Paul tells us: *"Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ?... Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit? You are not your own; ... so glorify God in your body"* (1 Cor 6:15, 19-

20). Aware of this ennobling fact, we must respect our own bodies as vessels of our souls and of the very body and blood of Christ Jesus our Risen God. We must, as well, give respect to and treat with dignity the bodies of our neighbors, for we are all part of Christ and we are all one in him.

Jesus said that *"apart from me you can do nothing"* (Jn 15:5) but *"with God nothing will be impossible"* (Lk 1:37). By her Assumption into Heaven, the Mother

of God has already been glorified in body and soul (see Rv 12:1). This is indeed for us a sign of hope that we, too, can look forward

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to our own bodily resurrection, to enjoy forever the sight and company of God as the complete human beings he created us to be. St. Paul sums up the time and manner of our resurrection and glorification: *"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"* (1 Cor 15:51-53). Death has been conquered, *"swallowed up in [Christ's] victory"* (1 Cor 15:54). In a rapture of love and joy, we will join with the angels and saints in a grand *"Hosannah in the highest!"* (Mk 11:9).

(CCC 556, 966, 988-1004)