

Resurrection of the Body Tuesday in the Easter Octave April 22, 2014 8:15 AM
Acts 2:36-41; **Jn 20:11-18** (The resurrection Jesus is a testimony to the goodness of creation and the continuity between this world and what God is creating anew.)

Yesterday I mentioned how these different gospel stories do not exactly agree with each other. Yesterday we had Matthew, and the women saw Jesus and knew exactly who he was; today Mary Magdalene doesn't recognize him.

Well, we have to keep in mind **the stories we have in the gospel were written many years after the fact**, many years. So the first gospel, Mark, whose ending actually has been lost, was written about 70, and then Matthew about 80, John maybe shortly after that, and Luke perhaps after that. So the actual writings come after quite a while. **All along, these stories circulated in various oral forms.** It's those forms that the evangelists used to put together the gospels. So we understand why these details are not exactly the same.

But now what are they really getting at; what are they getting at? **What is the resurrection of Jesus really about?** Well, **in the ancient world the spiritual leaders**, the most advanced Adepts in spirituality, came from India. India was the birthplace of Yoga, and Yoga was the mother of both Buddhism and Hinduism and also in a way Jainism, although most people don't know much about Jainism. Now in this system, this great aesthetic, mystical system of religious practice, the human body was considered as pretty much nothing but a prison, something to be gotten out of, left behind. The various practices of Yoga and other religions that derive from Yoga were all about **developing some kind of independent spiritual soul apart from the body**, that could exist without the body. In fact, the very idea of mixing human consciousness, which is a spiritual reality, with physical matter was considered a terrible cosmic mistake. It created a web of delusion called *Maya*. So the goal of any real spirituality, of any real religion, was to get away from this web of delusion, to withdraw from life as we see it.

But this was not the **Jewish belief** at all. This was not the testimony of the Bible. In the Bible **God created everything. The material world is good**; everything is good. It could be abused, but it's good. Life in the body is good; it's a blessing. Abraham was called to be a blessing to all of his neighbors. So the redemption of life is already beginning in Abraham's time, calling people to recognize the goodness of life and the goodness of God and the good will of God toward his creation, and to dissuade people from abusing the blessings God has given, and to live an upright life, where one could really enjoy all of what God has made, which is really **the goal of a moral life. It's to enjoy the goodness that God has created.** In a way, the **Greeks** agreed with that goal, enjoying the good life, but they also tended to be like the Indians in their belief that the body was a sort of a something to be left behind, that ultimately **goodness was all about the spirit and the spiritual world.** Well, that doesn't fit Jewish ideas and it doesn't fit the revelation, so to speak, of the Bible.

When **Jewish people** thought about the possibility of actually living beyond death, they **thought about the resurrection of the body**, because for them living without a body wasn't living. So the resurrection of Jesus is a testimony to the goodness of creation and the **continuity between this world and what God is creating anew**, the new creation. They are

in continuity, although it's true we can't see into that world right now; but there is continuity. **The continuity is assured in the resurrection of Jesus himself.**

It's very interesting that modern physicists speculate that there are many universes. Many universes exist: billions, trillions, whatever, although we don't know anything about them. That's an interesting speculation, not that it has any particular merit, in my view, but it's interesting in the sense that **if physicists can imagine whole universes that really exist, but which we cannot communicate with, then they should have no trouble imagining the kingdom of God** as a truly material universe that we are not able to see or to touch or to communicate with, but which is nonetheless really material and really a creation. **And this real creation operates under laws different from the laws of this creation.** Well, that has **already been imagined by modern physics.** Of course there could be a universe that has different laws, and indeed! **So we see that in the resurrection of Jesus different laws are at work.** For example, he could walk through doors. He can appear out of nowhere and return to nowhere, much the way physicists imagine virtual particles pop into existence and out again, even in our world.

So the purpose of these stories is, first of all, to assure us of the goodness of life, the goodness of creation, and the future blessings which God destines us for, to be in continuity with the present, so that our daily lives should be as dedicated to God as possible, because what we take with us into eternity will be the same person. It's not going to be somebody else. We are not going to be somebody else in eternal life with God. We will be the same person. We will have identifiable bodies. St. Thomas says they will all be thirty years old; I don't know about that, but they will be healthy. They will be prosperous. They will be real. They will be material. How can all this be? No one knows. **But this is indicated by the very idea of the resurrection of Jesus in a human body;** but a human body, material though it was, operating under a different set of laws with different potentials, and so on. So this is not something that we believe simply to entertain ourselves. This is given to us as a horizon of hope to draw us, to draw us to the beauty and to the attractiveness of God's plan for us.