

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

Finish the Race Sts. Peter and Paul, apostles Saturday, June 29, 2019 Acts 12:1-11;
2 Tm 4:6-8, 17-18; Mt 16:13-19 (So even after our death we can still choose, according to
St. Paul's model.)

“I have competed well; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith.”

This image of finishing the race comes from the Greek games, **the marathons**. What's important about a marathon is that, yes, there is a winner, but it is not only the winner who wins, but **everyone who finishes is, in a way, a winner**. They don't get the crown, but they are still winners because they finish. **Paul's point is that life is a marathon**. Too many people are trying to win the crown when in fact all they really need to do is finish. That's something we have to keep in mind because we over-compete. **The idea of a marathon allows everyone to finish if they keep going**. So in life we have to just keep going. We can get tired. We can get thirsty. We can have problems, sores, cramps; all kinds of things can try to impede us. The point is we have to keep going.

Now what are we involved in in going? What is the point of the race? **The point is to make something of our lives as a gift to God**. It does not totally depend on us, although we have to make a contribution. Here in the gospel Peter represents a whole Church through his rock of faith, which is the statement: “You are the Christ.” To believe that Jesus is the anointed of God and that Jesus is the model for life, that's the rock of the Church. We just have to keep that in mind: **strive toward that goal of modeling our lives on him**. It's a long route. It goes on and on and on, but we can finish.

And I would have to say that we probably can finish even beyond this earth. Now St. Thomas Aquinas was a brilliant man, and yet he was also impeded by the fact that he read too many of the Greek philosophers. The Greeks believed that the body was necessary for the will to operate. We are body/soul, but the two have to be together for the will to operate. So that when a

person dies, St. Thomas thought, that was it; no more choice was possible. But that does not agree with St. Paul. **St. Paul said there are three bodies that coexist. There's the fleshly body the *soma sarkikon*; then there's the psychic body the *soma psychikon*; and then there is the spiritual body the *soma pneumatikon*.**

Now this idea of St. Paul is actually very important because it means that we can choose through, not only our physical bodies, which we can obviously, but **we can also choose through our mental bodies.** What is a mental body? Actually it's another word for a mind, an organized mind. **So even after our death we can still choose, according to St. Paul's model. And the spiritual body of course is the organization of all the spiritual energies, which begin on earth, but reach perfection elsewhere.** So this should give us a great deal of hope, **understanding the great mercy of God that we can commend to the Lord all those who have gone before us, praying for their ability to choose God and to finish the race.**