

The Fifth Sunday of Easter – 10th May 2020 – The Resurrection of Christ from the Dead

During these forty days, between Easter Day and Ascension Day, we continue to celebrate with great joy, the Resurrection of Christ from the dead. He is risen! Alleluia! Our perishable nature has put on the imperishable! And our mortal nature has put on immortality! (1 Corinthians 15 v 53/54). And, "if the Spirit of Him Who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in **you**, He Who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to **your** mortal bodies, through His Spirit Who dwells in you" (Romans 8 v 11), for "the trumpet shall sound and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed!" (1 Cor. 15 v 52).

The Resurrection of Christ is at the very centre of our Faith (1 Cor. 15 v 17), and yet the Resurrection Body of Jesus eludes our understanding. Firstly, because we understand that the Resurrection Body of Jesus is the Same Body conceived in the Womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary and offered in Sacrifice on the Altar of the Cross – " Ave verum Corpus natum, De Maria Virgine" (Hail! True Body, Born of Mary the Virgin). The Risen Jesus is not a spirit – " see my hands and my feet , that it is I myself; handle me, and see; for a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see that I have" and then, astonishingly, (to prove the point) "they gave Him a piece of broiled fish, and He took it and ate it before them" (St. Luke 24 v 29-43).

And yet, secondly, although the Resurrection of Jesus is literal and physical and He is not a ghost or spirit, **nevertheless**, of the resurrection body, St. Paul tells us " it is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body. But it is not the spiritual which is first but the physical and then the spiritual" (1 Cor. 15 v 44-48). Thus the physical body is spiritualised. It is changed (v 51).

There are two aspects of the spiritualised Resurrection Body of Jesus which stand out in the gospel accounts of His Resurrection appearances. Firstly, He is able to suddenly appear and then disappear. Even though the doors were locked, Jesus "came and stood among them" (St. John 21 v 19); and at Emmaus, "He vanished from their sight" (St. Luke 24 v 31). Secondly, and this perhaps is the most puzzling feature of the Resurrection Body (and the gospel writers are quite unembarrassed about making this clear), those to whom Jesus appeared did not immediately recognise Him. On the road to Emmaus, "their eyes were kept from recognising Him" (St. Luke 24 v 16). Mary Magdalene "turned around and saw Jesus but she did not know that it was Him" (St. John 20 v 14). "Jesus stood on the beach, yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus" (St. John 21 v 4). How was this possible? It would seem that the spiritualised Resurrection Body is "malleable". We know something of this even in our present life when emotions or terrible experiences can contort the face, and even close acquaintances seem almost unrecognisable. It is indeed a recognised wonder of the human face that it can precisely express such a multitude of emotions and thoughts and feelings. It would seem, therefore, that in the spiritualised Resurrection Body, this feature of physical expression is super-charged to enable the Resurrection Body to appear quite different from one moment to the next.

This mystery is, presumably, also incorporated into the clothing of the Resurrection Body. Presumably the Risen Jesus not only seemed to be clothed but wore clothes as real as His Resurrection Body – but those clothes (presumably) were not made by human hand, they came into existence, and changed, as appropriate to each Resurrection appearance.

The Resurrection of Christ reveals the deeper structures and the meaning of the Universe. It reveals, the Power and the Presence of God in Creation, the Angelic realm underpinning the Cosmos, the purpose and the destiny of our existence, and therefore everything else in the universe is to be interpreted and understood in the light of the Resurrection, such that all knowledge which mitigates against the truth of the Resurrection is overthrown by the Resurrection. Of human knowledge, the Resurrection says, "Thus far shalt thou come, and no further!". The whole earth is now Holy Ground, for the very earth, the cosmos itself, is resurrected in Christ. The Death and Resurrection of Christ have made foolish the wisdom of this world (1 Cor. 1 v 20), so that our Faith no longer rests in the wisdom of men but in the power of God" (1 Cor. 2 v 5). As we continue through this long "Good Friday" of the Church (the suspension of the public celebration of Mass and the dislocation of the Church, the Body of Christ) we look forward to Resurrection! May this wilderness experience bring us through to uplands of grace and copious streams of Divine Mercy. Keep the Faith! Remain faithful to the Risen Jesus! Be faithful even unto death (and through this little sleep of the Church), "and I will give you the crown of life" (Rev.2 v 10). Amen! Come, Lord Jesus! (Rev.22 v 20).