

SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (2025 - C)

Today, I would like to say a few words about Saint Paul's comments on the resurrection. Specifically, on the resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. To that end, I would like to make four points.

First, what do we mean when we say something has died?

Second, what do we mean when we speak about the resurrection of Jesus Christ?

Third, how does belief in the resurrection of Jesus Christ change our lives?

Fourth, how would our lives be different if Christ had not been raised?

So to the first question, what do we mean when we say something has died? At first glance, this should be an easy question to answer, but in reality, it's not so simple. To answer it, we must first make a distinction between living beings and non-living beings. In other words, we must answer the question, "What do living beings have that non-living beings do not?"

For example, what is the difference between a toad and a diamond? What is the difference between a daisy and an ice cube? What is the difference between an eagle and a gold nugget? What is the difference between a lion and helium gas?

In all these examples, we can easily tell which thing is living and which is not. That said, we are still left with this question: What makes one thing alive and the other not? Why can a living thing die whereas a non-living thing cannot?

In answer, we say that all living things have a soul, and we define soul as the principle of life. We also say that the soul gives to living beings certain powers that non-living beings do not have. In fact, all living things have three basic powers, nutrition, growth and generation. That is, they are able to assimilate elements from their environment into themselves. They can also grow until they reach a certain maturity, and they can reproduce. Higher living beings have additional powers. Animals can know things outside of themselves through their external senses of sight and so on. Finally, we human beings have two additional powers, our intellect and our free will.

That said, only living things can die. Non-living things cannot. Death happens to living things when the soul and body are separated. For the lower creatures, when the body can no longer sustain life, the soul corrupts and ceases to exist. At that point, with the soul no longer present, the body begins to break down and returns to the elements from which it was made.

So, to answer our first question, death is the separation of our soul from our body. However, here we have to make a distinction between the souls of plants and animals and the souls of human beings. That's because human beings have an immortal soul whereas plants and animals do not. Because human souls are spiritual, when we die, our souls continue to exist; they do not corrupt like those of the plants or animals. Instead, our souls will exist forever.

Now to our second question. What do we mean when we speak about the resurrection of Jesus Christ? What we mean is this.

On the third day, on that first Easter Sunday, Jesus Christ rose from the dead. He who had died on the cross, He whose mangled body had been laid in the tomb was once again alive. He had been restored to life. His soul has been reunited to His body.

Now this fact is noteworthy for one simple reason. People don't come back to life once they have died. It doesn't happen. I have conducted hundreds of funerals, and so far, no one I have buried has come back to life. They are all still in their graves.

Yet, that was not so with Jesus. He not only rose from the dead, but He was also seen by numerous people. He was seen by the Apostles. He was seen by Mary Magdalene. He was seen by many of His disciples. Furthermore, His body was touched by Mary Magdalene, and Saint Thomas was invited to probe the nail holes in His hands, and Jesus ate food in the presence of His disciples.

Could all of these people have been mistaken or deceived? I think not. It was clear to them that Jesus was alive. He who had been put to death had risen from the dead.

So to our third question, how does belief in the resurrection of Jesus Christ change our lives? What difference does it make?

This great miracle of the Resurrection confirms our Lord's teachings. It is the ultimate proof that Jesus is who He claimed to be, the very Son of God, or as the Creed says, He is God from God and light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, consubstantial with the Father.

This also means that because He is God, everything Jesus taught is true. It means that He came into the world not to condemn the world but to save the world (Jn 3:17). It means that "Everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life (Jn 6:40)." It means that on the last day, we too will rise and our bodies will be restored to us. On the other hand, it also means that those who do not believe will be condemned (Mk 16:16). These are all words found in the Holy Gospels and words spoken by Christ.

So, our faith in the resurrection of Jesus Christ is not a blind faith, but a faith attested to by many witnesses, and it makes a great deal of difference. For us who put this faith into practice, it's the difference between eternal life with God in heaven and eternal death apart from Him in hell.

Now to our last question. How would our lives be different if Christ had not been raised? Saint Paul answers this question in our Second Reading with a series of interrelated arguments, and these arguments are just as valid today as they were back in the time of Saint Paul.

Just as in Saint Paul's time there were many who denied that Jesus rose from the dead, so too in our own times, there are many who deny the Resurrection. These include religious people such as Jews, Moslems and Hindus and Buddhists and they also include many unbelievers as well as those who just don't care.

Saint Paul says these unbelievers are wrong, and he begins his argument this way. He first points out there are people who say there is no resurrection of the dead. In other words, once we die, once the soul leaves the body, there will never be a restoration or a reunification of the soul and the body. In other words, once you are dead you are dead.

However, Saint Paul says if this were true, then Christ could not be raised either because He was not only true God but also true man who shared completely in our human nature. So if we human beings cannot be raised from the dead, then neither can Christ be raised.

Furthermore, if that were true, then Christ's death on the cross accomplished nothing. He would not have conquered sin and Satan and death. If Christ had not be raised from the dead, then our faith in Him would be pointless. It would be nothing more than a useless superstition.

It would also mean that those who have fallen asleep in Christ, that is, those who died believing in Christ, are no more. They have perished and have ceased to exist.

Finally, if Christ has not been raised, then we are truly in a sorry state because we have been chasing a dream. We were looking at a mirage. We were trusting in a lie and everything we do and have done by faith is just a colossal waste of time.

Furthermore, if that is so, if we have been wasting our time, we are to be pitied like we might pity someone with a terminal illness who has an unrealistic hope for a cure, or we might pity someone who lost all his money and but hopes he can win it back at the casino.

If we have based our faith on a lie, then yes, others could rightly feel sorry for us, and in fact, this is how many people do look upon us today. Those who don't accept the resurrection of Jesus Christ do feel sorry for us because they think we are deluded and have based our lives on false hopes.

Yet, in reality it's just the other way around. Jesus Christ has been raised from the dead. He is the first fruit of those who have fallen asleep, and on the last day when Christ comes again, we too, along with all those who have fallen asleep in Christ, will be raised from the dead, and then we will join Him forever in heaven.

So, belief in the Resurrection has changed our lives, and it will change all those who come to know Christ. Jesus Christ has risen from the dead, and He has saved us from our sins. So then, let us have pity on those without faith, and let us do what we can to share our faith with them. Let us share with them the good news of the resurrection. Amen.