

### **Third Sunday of Easter – Cycle B (April 22, 2012)**

We had to do it: my sister and I had to take away the car keys from our father, an experience that is sad and heartbreaking. But it had to be done. My father's body is getting old and tired, a reality that we all have to face.

This experience of growing old and seeing the body slowly weaken makes us see the body as the soul's prisoner, something that must be "shed" at the time of death. This attitude gives way to the belief that we are only our souls and not our bodies; that once our souls are free from the confines of the body, we are truly whole and complete. And we continue to divide and separate the soul from the body, a belief completely contrary to scripture and our faith in the Risen Lord.

We are our bodies *and* souls. We are "soulful-bodies" which means that our identities as persons include our bodies. The separation of our souls from our deceased bodies is temporary; we are all destined to be reunited with our transformed bodies at the resurrection on the last day as we profess: "I believe ... in the resurrection of the body and life everlasting. Amen."

When the risen Jesus appeared to the disciples, they thought he was a ghost and they were terrified. It was imperative that they believe that it was really *Him* by touching his body: He wasn't a ghost, he was body and soul; the totality of the person of Jesus was not just his soul (spirit) but his transformed body united to his soul.

This is our Easter faith: we need our bodies to see, touch, embrace and love. Can you imagine life without our bodies? At this Eucharistic assembly, we can see and physically touch each other, creating a bond of love and unity. God created the heavens (spirit) and the earth (body) and said it was all good. We have a little baby about to be baptized. Can you even imagine a baby without that wonderful small body exuding life and purpose? What happens when a baby enters a room? Everybody smiles and laughs and becomes like a child again. At the Incarnation, the Second person of the Blessed trinity became human, he was born into our existence with a body as well as a soul. The Incarnation blessed forever our physical bodies, it blessed forever the physical world we call "creation."

But in this life our bodies do grow old and we must experience the reality of death, an experience that separates our souls from our bodies. But Easter reminds us that our ultimate destiny is to get back our bodies in a transfigured form, one that will never die again. In this life which is so fleeting and transitory, we need our bodies, tired and old as they may be, to express our love. The most important word in today's gospel is "touch," for Jesus said to "touch me." One simple "touch" from one body to another, can send powerful forces of healing. A baby that isn't "touched" will be underdeveloped and deprived.

The heart of the Mass are the words: "This is my body" and "This is my blood." We feed on the "body" of the Risen Lord, a physical and not just spiritual feeding. In the gospel Jesus said to give him something to eat as proof that it was really him, alive and risen in the body. We are nourished by the Word and Eucharist to continue the journey that will lead to us "the resurrection of the body and life everlasting."

At this moment of glory, I can imagine countless numbers of people getting back the keys to their cars.