

Redemption and Resurrection Intimately Linked

Following is excerpted from an address by Pope John Paul II on the resurrection.

"The resurrection of Christ is the last and the fullest word of the self-revelation of the living God as 'not God of the dead, but of the living.' It is the last and fullest confirmation of the truth about God which is expressed right from the beginning through this revelation. The resurrection, furthermore, is the reply of the God of life to the historical inevitability of death, to which man was subjected from the moment of the breaking of the first Covenant and which, together with sin, entered his history.



(St. Paul's statement) about the victory over death is illustrated by the First Letter to the Corinthians with extraordinary perspicacity, presenting the resurrection of Christ as the beginning of that eschatological fulfillment, in which, through Him, and in Him, everything will return to the Father, everything will be subjected to Him, that is, handed back definitively, "that God may be everything to everyone."

And then — in this definitive victory over sin, over what opposed the creature to the creator — also will death be vanquished: "The last enemy to be destroyed is death."

The words that can be considered the synthesis of Pauline anthropology concerning the resurrection take their place in this context. And it is on these that it will be opportune to dwell here.

We read, in fact, about the resurrection of the dead: "What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a

physical body, there is also a spiritual body. Thus it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being;" the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. But it is not the spiritual which is first but the physical, and then the spiritual.

Between this Pauline anthropology of the resurrection and the one that emerges from the text of the synoptic Gospels, there exists an essential consistency, only the text of the First Letter to the Corinthians is more developed. Paul studies in depth what Christ has proclaimed, penetrating at the same time into the various aspects of that truth which had been expressed concisely and substantially in the words written by the synoptics. It is also significant for the Pauline text that man's eschatological perspective, based on faith "in the resurrection of the dead," is united with reference to the "beginning" as well as with deep awareness of man's "historical" situation.

It belongs therefore to the style of Paul's synthesis that it plunges its roots into the revealed mystery of creation and redemption as a whole, from which it is developed and in the light of which alone it can be explained. The creation of man, according to the biblical narrative, is an enlivening of matter by means of the spirit, thanks to which "the first Adam became a living being."

The Pauline text here repeats the words of Genesis, that is, of the second narrative of the creation of man (the so-called Yahwist narrative). From the same source it is known that this original "animation of the body" underwent corruption because of sin.

Although at this point of the First Letter to the Corinthians the author does not speak directly of original sin, the series of definitions which he attributes to the body of historical man, writing that it is "perishable . . . weak . . . physical . . . in dishonor," indicates sufficiently what, according to revelation, is the consequence of sin, that which Paul himself will call elsewhere "bondage to decay."

The whole of creation is subjected indirectly to this "bondage of decay" owing to the sin of man, who was placed by the Creator in the midst of the visible world in order "to subdue" it.

So man's sin has a dimension that is not only interior, but also "cosmic." And, according to this dimension, the body — which Paul (in conformity with his experience) characterizes as "perishable . . . weak . . . physical . . . in dishonor" — expresses in itself the state of creation after sin. This creation in fact, "has been groaning in travail together until now."

However, just as the pains of labor are united with the desire for birth, with the hope of a new man, so too the whole of creation "waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God," and cherishes the hope to "be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God."

Through this "cosmic" context of the affirmation contained in the Letter to the Romans — in a way, through the "body of all creatures" — let us try to understand completely the Pauline interpretation of the resurrection. If this image of the body of historical man, so deeply realistic and adapted to the universal experience of men, conceals within itself, according to Paul, not only the "bondage of decay," but also hope, like the hope that accompanies "the pains of labor," that happens because the Apostle grasps in this image also the presence of the mystery of redemption.

Awareness of that mystery comes precisely from all man's experiences which can be defined as "bondage of decay;" and it comes because redemption operates in man's soul by means of the gifts of the Spirit; " . . . we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies."

Redemption is the way to the resurrection. The resurrection constitutes the definitive accomplishment of the redemption of the body.

More Opinions

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Parents Anon Needs Help

Editor:

The budget cutbacks are making it necessary for social agencies to use more volunteers than ever before. Just because money is not allocated for necessary social issues does not mean these problems no longer exist. Child abuse exists in Monroe County and Parents Anonymous continues to do something about it. Parents Anonymous has been proven one of the most effective programs in stopping and preventing child abuse. And, to operate, we need more volunteers.

Guidelines

The Courier-Journal welcomes your opinions. Letters must bear the writer's signature, full address and telephone number. They should be sent to Opinion, Courier-Journal, 114 S. Union St., Rochester, N.Y. 14607.

Opinions should be brief, typed, double-spaced, no longer than 1 1/2 pages.

We routinely condense letters, edit offensive words and libelous statements, and reserve the right to reject letters. Generally speaking, however, only limited grammatical corrections will be made and the letters will reflect the writer's own style.

Because submitted opinions exceed the space for letters, we publish only original letters addressed to us. We will not use poetry, open letters, or copies of letters sent elsewhere. To ensure diversity, we limit each writer to one letter per month.

If you are concerned about the problem of child abuse, why not become a Parents Anonymous volunteer? Challenging and rewarding volunteer opportunities are offered in child care, public relations, fund-raising, transportation and office support. People also are needed to staff the PA hotline, which is done from one's own home. Leadership positions in all areas are available. We also are seeking group facilitators (sponsors) for parent meetings as well as for groups dealing with sexual abuse. Volunteers do not need previous experience or formal training for most positions. Training will begin in mid-May.

For more information, call Parents Anonymous at 454-5060. Please take the challenge; you can make a difference to many families.

Kathy Martin
Training Specialist
Parents Anonymous
121 N. Fitzhugh St.
Rochester, N.Y. 14614

Pope Seen Inconsistent

Editor:

I was very saddened when I read of the imposition of direct rule by the Vatican replacing the autonomy of the Jesuit Order under Father Vincent O'Keefe. Our Holy Father has been very concerned about the oppression of his Polish people and their revolt on behalf of representation in their government. I am therefore surprised that he takes away personal representation from the Jesuits under their provincial.

I am further concerned that he cannot see the political involvement of the Jesuit priests as an extension of their pastoral ministry and concern to witness the truth and justice of Jesus Christ to the world. How else could they

witness to the exploitation and continued impoverishment of millions without being involved in redeeming the political practices of those nations? How could a priestly order which ministers to people in the Third World, underprivileged nations, not be involved in political liberation? Are they not following the mandate of Christ: "What you do to the least of these, my brethren, you also do to me?"

I am further confused at Our Holy Father's dichotomy of thought about psychosocial thinking and theology. Is not the study of the behavior of mankind and the human spirit intrinsic to pastoral ministry? Perhaps it is because of ignorance in training in these areas in the past that there are so many atrocities committed against people that are never censured as inappropriate pastoral practice.

Yet a faithful priestly order is censured because it chooses to examine the relevance of issues such as priestly celibacy, married clergy, birth control and liberation of the oppressed, in light of the Gospel.

If Our Holy Father's intervention in Jesuit rule is an "act of love," then I pray he will explore more just and representational ways for all of us as the people of God to be involved in decision making and scrutiny, as Jesus' ministry exemplified. True, we have national and local councils but are not these also paradigms of authoritarian elitism rather than communal representation of the Church?

Father Joachim Bernos, provincial for the Jesuits in the Philippines, describes his priests' involvement in the political struggles of their people as the only truthful and just witness against the false claims of the government

to have representation for the people. There is suppression of any public representation by military intervention in the same model of oppression as is seen in Latin America. Was not Jesus also involved in speaking against the injustices of his time?

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