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Pastor's Pen: The Resurrection Changes Everything...or it Should

One of the most recognizable relics within Christianity is the Shroud of Turin. It is the burial cloth that the Body of Jesus was wrapped in after the crucifixion. Numerous scientific tests have been done that verify the cloth is the age it should be, has pollens and other trace elements endemic to 1st Century Israel, and depicts a man who had fatal trauma and crucifixion. How the image got there is still not explained. We know it is not a painting or any other man-made artistry that produced the image on the veil. The latest theories involve a belief that a burst of energy so intense that it cannot be replicated in any laboratory and so briefly created the image.

Various theories notwithstanding, the resurrection of Jesus changes everything. First, to be clear, we are not talking about resuscitation. Resuscitation would be the re-animation of previously dead tissue. Jesus was not a sacred version of Frankenstein or a halo-wearing zombie after the resurrection. Resurrection is not synonymous with resuscitation. The physical body of Jesus is transformed to having both the physicality (he eats, can be touched, and such after the resurrection) and the eternal aspect of something no longer subject to time and space (He walks through locked doors, appears and vanishes at will). We call this the glorified body. This is what is ahead for us at the End Times.

The Vindication of the Cross

When we are at the end of Good Friday, we have this feeling that all is not done. Even the chief priests have this foreboding that all is not yet done as they ask Pilate to station guards at the tomb to prevent the disciples from removing the body from the tomb and exclaiming Jesus had risen. For the enemies of Jesus, although the crucifixion seems a victory, it is one that is short-lived. The Passion and Crucifixion is not the end of the story. The obedience of Jesus Christ at Golgotha is given victory at the Resurrection. By submitting Himself to the death we deserve for our sins, He opens the way to heaven.

The effects are not just for the future, but have a direct effect now. The chains of slavery of sin and death are cut free from us, if we so choose to have them cut and walk as people who have been freed. There are three major ways this new life given through the resurrection finds their hold in our lives: Baptism/Confirmation, Eucharist, and Reconciliation.

The Resurrection and Baptism/Confirmation

I treat these two sacraments as one because in the early Church they were one. As the Church grew and it was no longer possible for the bishop to baptize everyone, the final anointing with Chrism was reserved for him to do at a later date; that third and final anointing is called Confirmation.

Because of the resurrection, baptism is given a power that moves beyond mere repentance, as was the baptism of John the Baptist. It is given that ability through the resurrection to be the way we are

reborn. Eternal friendship with God was not possible before the Death and Resurrection of Jesus because man's loss of sanctifying grace through the fall of Adam to sin had not yet been restored. Because Jesus fully took on our human nature to Himself in the Incarnation and was executed for crimes not His own, justice had been fulfilled and now the possibility of sanctifying grace could once again be restored.

The absence of sanctifying grace is called original sin. We are born without that sanctifying grace. After the death and resurrection, that grace is placed in us at baptism. This is why at baptisms we are dressed in white as a sign of new birth and given a candle symbolizing the light of Christ deposited within us as sanctifying grace is deposited within us. Baptism is a beginning and not an end unto itself. Baptism begins a process in growth of holiness that is further strengthened by the gift of the Holy Spirit at Confirmation. A faith-filled life is called to be lived. However, that life is not easy.

The Resurrection and Eucharist

On the night before He died, we know Jesus took Bread and Wine, elements of the Passover meal, and pronounces them to be His Body and Blood. He does this so that we who are given this new life in Christ, through His death and resurrection, might be given the strength day by day to live up to the standards of the new life given in Christ. This is why the Church has always considered willful abstention from the Sunday Mass as mortally sinful and hence driving the sanctifying grace necessary for entrance into heaven out of us. When we eat His Flesh and drink His Blood, we eat and drink the flesh and blood of the glorified Body of Jesus Christ. To absent ourselves from that, outside of sickness or tending to the sick, is to say we do not need such grace or that something is more important than that grace. The quickest way to maim and kill the life of sanctifying grace is to absent oneself from Mass.

The Resurrection and Reconciliation

The central point of the entire Christ event is a reconciliation of a relationship lost. God could not write off humanity although humanity has desperately deserved it. His death on the Cross opens the way for our sins being forgiven and eternal friendship with God being realized. While baptism does give us sanctifying grace, it does not take away our free will, the consequences of our free will, nor our desire to sin (aka concupiscence). The sanctifying grace given us at baptism is lost when we mortally sin. Without that sanctifying grace we are lost.

When Adam and Eve fell, there was no way for that grace to be restored until such time as the Son would become one of us without losing anything of who He is and restoring through His obedience what was lost through our disobedience. Because Jesus did this, we can be reconciled to God and have that sanctifying grace restored through the sacrament of Reconciliation. So central to His mission is this is the fact that on the day of the Resurrection, He breathes on the apostles and says "Receive the Holy Spirit, If you forgive men's sins they are forgiven them, if you hold them bound, they are held bound." (John 20:23) Jesus gives them the authority to forgive sins in His name, with His power.

This is because of God's eternal divine mercy...which I will write about next week.