

Homily for Easter Saturday
 Acts 4:13–21
 Psalm 118:1, 14–15b, 16–21
 Mark 16:9–15

The Trans-physical Body

Throughout this week we have been listening to stories at Mass of the Resurrection appearances. In all of these stories we have heard of two things. The witnesses to the Resurrection encounter Jesus in the flesh and as a result of that encounter they are commissioned by Jesus to tell others.

I want to think with you this morning about the Resurrection Body. The New Testament Scholar N.T. Wright has termed Jesus' Resurrection Body as being Trans physical. By this he means the body of the Resurrection was still robustly physical but also significantly different from our present day bodies. It was not less physical from these mortal bodies but more physical. It was the very body St Paul refers to in 1 Corinthians 15 when he compares the mortal and Trans physical bodies this way:

So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. 43 It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. 44 It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body.

In the readings we have heard all week we have pointers as to what is meant by Trans physicality. The witnesses to this event experienced the Resurrected Jesus in such a way that when he was with them, he could appear and disappear suddenly. He could also talk with them; they could touch him, and he ate with them. Because they were so transfixed by what they had experienced they could not remain quiet about it. Peter in responding to the Jewish authorities demand that he and John speak no more about Jesus counters with words of deep conviction:

Whether it is right in God's sight to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge; 20 for we cannot keep from speaking about what we have seen and heard."

Now here is the important part of all of this as illustrated by Peter's statement. Jesus told those who saw him in his Resurrected body they were to be witnesses of his Resurrection. In the Gospel of Mark, we have the most comprehensive commission of them all. For here in the last verse of the Gospel of Mark we hear Jesus say:

Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation.

All of creation is to have the Good News of the Resurrection proclaimed to it because all of creation will in the long run be caught up in the Trans physical transformation inaugurated by the Resurrection of Jesus. Again St. Paul is the one who helps us understand the implications of this universal transformation. In Romans 8 he looks at our present situation from the perspective of the Resurrection and it is a perspective that encompasses all of creation.

I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. 19 For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God;* 20 for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of him who subjected it in hope; 21 because the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God

Do you hear what Paul is saying here? That in the present we experience a kind of suffering that is akin to a woman in labour. But the day will come when all of creation, both the children of God and creation itself will experience the kind of transformation that the Resurrection of Jesus anticipates. In other words all of creation will experience a Trans physical conversion that is the logical consequence of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

This has a particular implication for us in light of the environmental concerns so present today. Christians are to be environmentalists because our care for all of creation is a way to not only proclaim the Resurrection of Jesus. It is also a way for us in the present show through our stewardship of creation that creation itself matters to God and will be part of the redemption Paul speaks of in Romans 8.

Pope Francis in Laudato Si says as much when he points out:

“One Person of the Trinity entered into the created cosmos, throwing in his lot with it, even to the cross”

We therefore have a particular perspective to bring to the environmental conversation that is rooted in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ and his commission to proclaim the good news to all creation. This can inspire us to look at the present challenges in light of the Trans physical emphasis Jesus raised from the dead announces for the children of God and creation itself.