

**FINDING THE BONES OF JESUS:
WHAT DIFFERENCE WOULD IT MAKE?**

Loyola Chapel Lecture

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Introduction:

Just about a year ago—February 27, 2007 to be exact—the Discovery Channel ran a program, produced by James Cameron the director of the film *Titanic*, that made a sensational claim. It announced that the family tomb of Jesus had been found in Talpiot, a suburb of present day Jerusalem, and, perhaps even more startling, that the ossuary which had contained his bones had also been found with an inscription on it that appeared to read, “Jesus, son of Joseph.” And to put the icing on the cake, in the same tomb was an ossuary which had the inscription “Mariamene e Mara” on it, a name used in later Christian writings to refer to Mary Magdalene, with the added title, “the master.” There were several other ossuaries in the tomb and the traces of DNA remaining in the bone boxes suggested that this was a family tomb, with the exception of the DNA remains in the alleged Mary Magdalene bone box. The program’s conclusion: Jesus and Mary Magdalene were married and that’s the reason her remains were in a tomb that belonged to Jesus’ family. Dan Brown’s **Da Vinci Code** vindicated!!

Like the *Titanic* itself, the claims for this sensational find soon ran into an iceberg and began to sink. Indeed ossuaries were a common form of secondary burial in the first century. After a body had decomposed, the family would take the bones and place them in a carved limestone box or “ossuary” that would then be stored in a family tomb. Many of these have been found in the Jerusalem area. The tomb at Talpiot and the ossuaries it had contained were, without doubt, authentic first century Jewish tombs. But after that the problems with the claim

about this being the tomb of Jesus began to mount: this tomb had actually been discovered in 1980 when construction was underway for an apartment complex and the boxes were removed and put in storage. Amos Kloner, the Israeli archaeologist from Bar Ilan University who had done the original excavation, has rejected the claims that this was the tomb of Jesus of Nazareth and even that the name on the ossuary, which is very difficult to decipher and barely scratched on the limestone surface, can be definitely understood as referring to Jesus in the first place. Also that names such as Jesus, Joseph, Mary, Judas—names on the various ossuaries—were common place in first century Judaism. Further questions include why would Jesus' family have a tomb in Talpiot when they were from Galilee? Why would Mary Magdalene's ossuary bear a name that developed later in Hellenistic literature? Why would the inscription on Jesus' ossuary be so poorly done in contrast to others in the tomb? Above all, how could the gospel literature uniformly claim that Jesus' tomb was empty if there was a known family tomb in the Jerusalem area that could easily have debunked the Christian claims?

My purpose tonight is not to dwell on the many technical problems with this purported archaeological claim but to consider the question of Jesus' bones and whether the possibility of his tomb either being occupied or empty makes any difference to Christian faith. At a scholarly Jerusalem conference held shortly afterwards in response to the claims of the Talpiot discovery, James Charlesworth, a well known archaeologist and a Methodist (who by the way is very skeptical of the Discovery Channel's claims), was quoted as saying that this whole issue is in fact irrelevant to Christian faith because even if the bones of Jesus were found it would simply mean that Jesus had a spiritual body or a spiritual resurrection.

Speculation about what happened to the body of the Crucified Jesus is, of course, not simply a modern fascination. The four Gospels make clear that all of the first witnesses were

caught by surprise at discovering an empty tomb—they expected to find the body of Jesus in the tomb in which it had been laid right after his crucifixion. In the Gospels of Mark and Matthew the women who come on the day after the Sabbath to anoint Jesus' body wonder who will roll back the large stone that sealed the tomb so they could get to the body inside. In Matthew's Gospel the religious leaders request from Pilate a detail of soldiers to prevent the disciples of Jesus from coming and taking his body away—an alternate explanation for the resurrection that existed still in Matthew's own day and one that grudgingly admitted that the tomb was empty. In Luke's account when the women who discovered the empty tomb report back to the apostles, their claim is considered "nonsense." Peter runs to the tomb to check and is bewildered when he in fact finds it empty. And in John's account, Mary Magdalene goes to the tomb first and when she sees that it is empty assumes that someone has stolen Jesus' body.

So these earliest witnesses, like many today, assumed at the outset that the tomb of Jesus did contain his lifeless body. So the question remains—what did happen to the body of Jesus? And would it make any difference to Christian faith and spirituality if his bones were found and authenticated?

This in turn leads us directly to the question of resurrection and its meaning. We are in the first full week of Lent and preparing for the Triduum and Easter so this is a good question to wrestle with.

Let me say right at the start that the most radical and most fundamental of Christian beliefs is that Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified under the Roman Governor Pontius Pilate, rose from the dead, body and spirit. Note that resurrection faith does not mean simply that the cause of Jesus rose from the tomb of defeat. Not just that the words and deeds of Jesus were kept alive in the faith and living memories of the Christian community. Not just that through the

disciples the Jesus movement gathered momentum and spread throughout the Mediterranean world. Beyond all of these reasonable claims, Christian resurrection faith affirms the belief that Jesus who truly died, who lost his life, was transformed by the power of God and given renewed life, new corporeal, bodily life. And Christian faith concludes, because of who Jesus truly was, that singular defeat of death changes everything for humanity and for our created world. The tomb—the home of the dead—was made empty.

My object this evening is not to discuss whether Jesus rose from the dead—the ground zero of Christian faith—but, assuming one does believe in Jesus' resurrection, to consider the consequences of such faith for us as human beings. Specifically what does the **bodily** resurrection of Jesus from the dead mean for us as Christians?

Let us step back a bit and consider this. The notion of resurrection makes us think about our bodiliness. We humans are essentially corporeal beings; we do not exist in any other way. In considering the meaning of our bodies some have suggested that rather than thinking in the classical mode that human beings are a union of two separable components—body and spirit or soul that we should, rather, think of the body as the essential expression of the spirit. In his book on the meaning of possessions in the New Testament, Luke Timothy Johnson offers a kind of meditation on this idea. Our body is an extension of our spirit. We sense that the spirit is in a central zone of our bodies and that our bodies enable our spirit to communicate and expand. *E.g., of mental illness; fetal position.* Our possessions themselves are, in a sense, extensions of our body—enabling us to reach beyond our immediate sphere. Through the use of money and investments we can extend the impact of our body/spirit even beyond our lifetime.

Through the extension of our bodies we express our spirit—longing for expression, affirmation, communication. We recognize that our bodies also set limits to our spirit and that

our bodies are mortal and finite but nevertheless it is through them that our transcendent aspirations take expression in speech, song, touch, art, construction, science. Our bodies, even though inherently frail and vulnerable from many points of view, still cling fiercely to life and resist the force of death.

We should also note the essential connection through our bodiliness to all the rest of the created world and indeed the universe itself. We are becoming even more aware these days that we are part of our planet, indeed our universe because of matter, because of our bodiliness. We are essentially dependent upon the material world in which we exist.

Bodiliness, too, makes possible all of our social interaction: the development of human love and friendship through complex and beautifully subtle rituals of seeing and touching and being with, the ability to express that love through our sexuality, the ability to continue the human species and our own family identity through procreation, and so on. The fact that we have bodies also sets up the social agenda for humanity: because we have bodies we need food, shelter, healthy environment, protection from violence and disease. If we were not essentially corporeal much of what we name as issues of justice would go away.

Our bodiliness also makes us think about the meaning of death. It is clear and self-evident that the experience of death dissolves and destroys the body. Even before the moment of death itself, we experience in our bodies symptoms of our mortality: aging, illness, the threat of disease or violence. Because we are bodily beings, the severe terminality of death is apparent to us. Anyone who has directly experienced the death of a loved one knows that things will never be the same. The person we knew and loved in their living, present body is no longer with us.

The biblical peoples clearly recognized the essentially corporeal nature of the human being. Some years ago, the famed Swiss biblical scholar and theologian Oscar Cullman wrote a

famous essay entitled “Immortality and Resurrection” which was published in a collection of articles under that same title. In his essay Cullmann contrasted the anthropologies of the biblical peoples with that of classical neo-Platonic thought prevalent in the first century Greco-Roman world. Believing that the body and soul were essentially different components of the human being and that true humanness was to be found in the soul not the body, Plato’s story of Socrates’ death becomes a perfect illustration of such an anthropology. Faced with his execution by means of drinking the poison hemlock, Socrates chides those who weep at his impending death—assuring them that he considered death a friend because it would release his immortal soul from the prison of his mortal body. Cullman contrasts this scene with the gospel portrayals of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus, who was a Semite and who viewed the human being as an essentially corporeal spirit and for whom the body was good, when faced with the specter of his death prays for deliverance from death and asks his disciples to pray with him in his moment of fear and sorrow. For Jesus—as it was for all of the New Testament—death was not a friend but an enemy. In his first letter to the Corinthians Paul calls death the “last enemy.”

This perspective, of course, derives from the entire biblical view of the body and of creation itself. God is the creator and what he creates—including what the Bible considers the summit of creation, the human body—is deemed to be “good,” indeed tov meod—“very good.” The human body-person is given responsibility for the material world of creation, naming the animals and caring for them. The human body-persons, male and female, are urged to become “one flesh” and to multiply.

Sin and death enter the world as the enemies of God and as a mortal threat to the human body-person and to the world in which they live. Death was not God’s original idea for humanity, as the Book of Wisdom notes (1:13-16):

“God did not make death nor does he rejoice in the destruction of the living. For he fashioned all things that they might have being; and the creatures of the world are wholesome. And there is not a destructive drug among them nor any domain of the nether world on earth.... It was the wicked who with hands and words invited death in, considered it a friend, and pined for it, and made a covenant with it.”

Given this sort of perspective, it is not surprising that the gospels portray the mission of Jesus, God’s Son and the Messiah, as one who heals—heals bodies and spirits. This is a remarkable emphasis in the gospel literature. Jesus is not portrayed as a wisdom teacher or simply as a minister of the spirit. Instead, he is a healer, a “physician” (Mark 2:17; Luke 4:23) as he calls himself. Wading into a sea of broken bodies and restoring them, taking upon himself the physical pain and distress of the crowds whom he views with compassion, liberating the bodies he touches from the power of death, healing them, restoring the body-person to its home and social context, restoring their dignity as children of God—these are the characteristic actions of Jesus in the Gospels.

The gospel portrayal of Jesus as healer and its consequences for Christian anthropology is also matched by Pauline theology. Paul himself is portrayed in the Acts of the Apostles (e.g., Acts 14:3, 8-18; 16:16-18; 19:11-12, etc.) and even in his own words in such passages as 2 Cor 12:12 (“...signs and wonders and mighty works”; see also 1 Cor 2:4; Rom 15:18-19) as a healer, concerned about transforming human pain into the fullness of life. The extensive treatment of the question of resurrection in Paul is found in his first letter to the Corinthians, chapter 15. Apparently someone in this turbulent and energetic community—which Paul loved, by the way, but which was also a community that also drove him slightly crazy—asked about resurrection. Some apparently in the community were denying resurrection; others were claiming that it had

already happened and that living an exuberant Christian life in the present was what was meant by resurrection.

Paul rejects both of these views. If there is no resurrection, he argues, then Christ the first fruits of our redemption, was not raised and, if that is the case, then Christian believers are the most pitiable of all people. And if this present life with all its limitations and the dominating presence of death is what it is all about—then that, too, is a shame and makes our faith worthless.

Paul goes on to pose the question that still lingers in the air: “How are the dead raised? With what kind of a body will they come back?” (1 Cor 15:35).

Paul’s answer is sharp and pointed. There is no doubt that we are speaking of bodily resurrection but it is never a matter of someone “coming back” with a body that is similar or the same as they had when they experienced death. Like the grain of wheat buried in the ground that emerges as a life-giving plant, so the body that is buried is transformed into something wonderful: in Paul’s words, what was corruptible is raised incorruptible, what was deemed dishonorable, is raised glorious, what was weak is now powerful, and what was a “natural” (**psychikon**) body is now a “spiritual” (**pneumatikon**) body.

In this last series of contrasts, Paul uses language that has to be carefully understood. He makes the contrast between what he calls a “**sarkikos**” body—literally a “fleshy body”—or a “natural” (**psychikon**) body and a **pneumatikos** or ‘spiritual body.’ This is not a contrast between the corporeal and the spiritual or between the body and the soul. Paul is not speaking about a ghost! For Paul the connotation of “flesh” here and throughout his letters has to do not with flesh and bone but with the mortal and limited dimension of human existence—an existence ruled by sin and death. The “spiritual” or **pneumatikos** does not mean the immortal soul as such

but human life, body and soul, as transformed by the Spirit of Christ that now suffuses it and has overcome the power of sin and death.

Thus Paul in his discussion with the Corinthians affirms something that is consistent with all of the New Testament reflections on the meaning of bodily resurrection. It is not to be confused with resuscitation; it is not some kind of rescue from a near death experience; it is not more of the same. It is a thorough transformation of the body-spirit of the human person.

In another passage Paul introduces a dimension that is also important, namely that the resurrection inaugurated by Christ has an impact not only on human beings but on the created world itself. This is found in one of the most eloquent passages of Paul's letter, the 8th chapter of the letter to the Romans. Paul opens this chapter by again affirming the contrast between the "flesh" and the "spirit"—as we noted before, not a contrast between the body and the soul but between the human being as subject to death and mortality and the human person as liberated from God's Spirit to gain the fullness of human life, body and spirit. Paul ends this chapter with a lyrical hymn of hope:

"I consider the sufferings of this present time are as nothing compared with the glory to be revealed for us. For creation itself awaits with eager expectation the revelation of the children of God; for creation was made subject to futility, not of its own accord but because of the one who subjected it, in hope that creation itself will be set free from slavery to corruption and share in the glorious freedom of the children of god. We know that all creation is groaning in labor pains even until now; and not only that, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, we also groan within ourselves as we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies." (Romans 8:18-23).

This is truly a remarkable passage—creation itself will be redeemed along with the children of God. Paul, himself a strong proponent of Jewish tradition, affirms the beauty and sacredness of the world created by God, a world that will not be abandoned but whose groanings are birth pangs leading to new life.

Although it has a very different literary form and theological style, we should note that the Book of Revelation has a similar vision for the destiny of the human community and the created world itself. Composed within a community living under severe threat by the political and economic oppressions of the Roman Empire, the central concern of the Book of Revelation was: Who will inherit the earth? The demonic forces of death and destruction which ultimately stood behind the oppression of imperial rule? Or those who followed in the footsteps of the Lamb of God who shed his blood so that others might live? The answer of the Book of Revelation is clear: the old world of death is passing away and there will be a new heavens and a new earth where human beings will live in peace. The gaze of the Book of Revelation is not heavenward—but directed to the earth. The New Jerusalem, the exquisite capital of the new earth, comes down to be the city of those who have been washed clean in the blood of the Lamb. God's world will not die but be transformed.

We need to recall that for the New Testament writers—the evangelists and Paul and the other authors--the entire drama of human redemption takes place in the arena of Jesus' body. Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Son of Man, was viewed as the representative human being. Paul calls him the New Adam, the first born of a new creation. In Jesus' encounter with the force of death, it is as if all of humanity stands with him and also encounters the withering and destructive power of death. If Jesus were to have been totally consumed by death, then all hope for humanity itself to experience the triumph of life over death would be in vain.

The death of Jesus was not simply the death of his body, shattered by the exceedingly cruel form of capital punishment that crucifixion represented. For Jesus as for all human beings, the experience of death also meant the end to all of the relationships and vital activities that defined the lives of corporeal human beings. Jesus' mission of healing and teaching was no longer possible; his relationship with his disciples and his friends and his family was to be severed; his hopes of restoring Israel and the triumph of God's reign seemed to be aborted; even, the gospels dare to say, Jesus' relationship with his Father, with the God who was the absolute ground of his being, was in distress and threatened by the power of death that would crush the life out of his body and wrung from his lips the lament, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

The reality and the extended impact of Jesus' death must be contemplated to understand the full meaning of the resurrection. The Scriptures affirm that Jesus' trust in God, a trust under assault but never destroyed, becomes the slender thread that carries through in Jesus' journey from death to life. The God in whom he trusted—even in the face of death—raises him from the power of death; his body-spirit is transformed and has new power; the tomb is no longer his fated home; his relationships with his disciples and his family are renewed; and the mission of Jesus is given even stronger impulse under the power of God's Spirit. Life is shown to be more powerful than death.

Let us return to our opening question: would it make a difference if we found the bones of Jesus? I suppose a sophisticated theology might be able to say that the bones that were found were simply the residue of the "earthly" (**sarkikos**) body of Jesus and still believe that Jesus is present with a raised (**pneumatikos**) body. Perhaps one could still maintain orthodox faith in the bodily resurrection under such a scenario, although it would raise profound questions about the

reliability and credibility of the gospel traditions which uniformly assert that the tomb of Jesus was discovered to be empty—contrary to the expectations of the earliest witnesses.

But what is key for Christian faith, it seems to me, is to believe in the corporeal resurrection, the astounding transformation of the body/spirit that is Jesus Christ who was crucified, died and was buried—as our creed insists. The New Testament accounts emphasize this key point: the Risen Christ whose tomb was discovered to be empty and who was encountered in appearances and visions by an assortment of early witnesses, including later Paul himself, was truly identifiable with the Jesus of Nazareth who had lived and walked among them and who had experienced death by crucifixion.

Tell story of Saint Theresa of Avila and the vision of Satan: no wounds, no wounds. This beautifully story, of course, is inspired by the resurrection appearance stories in Luke and John. In Luke’s account, when Jesus appears to the disciples gathered in Jerusalem he says: “Look at my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me and see, because a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you can see I have. And as he said this, he showed them his hands and his feet.” (Luke 24:39-40). And, of course, the same happens in John’s account—when the Risen Christ appears he shows his disciples his hands and his side. (John 20:20)—a scene that also prepares for the following story of doubting Thomas who insists that he has to place his hand in the wounded hands and side of Jesus in order to believe.

To the testimony of the wounds is added the motif of the meals. The gospel literature makes clear that sharing a meal with his disciples and friends—and even his opponents—was an important part of the ministry of the historical Jesus. At his final Passover meal, conscious of his impending arrest, Jesus had said to his disciples: “...I shall not drink again the fruit of the vine until the days when I drink it new in the kingdom of God” (Mark 14:25). And here, too, the

resurrection stories use this motif as a way of emphasizing the identification between the earthly Jesus and the Risen Christ. In Luke's account the Risen Christ asks the stunned disciples if they have anything to eat—and they give him a piece of baked fish which Jesus proceeds to eat in front of them. Luke's exquisite story of the road to Emmaus also revolves around a meal where the disciples finally recognize the Risen Christ in this characteristic setting. And there is no more touching story in the gospels than the account in John 21 where the Risen Christ prepares a breakfast of grilled fish and bread for the stupefied disciples on the shore of the Sea of Galilee and then tenderly heals his bond with Peter who had publicly denied him three times.

At the same time these stories underscore the continuity of being between Jesus of Nazareth and the Risen Christ, they also emphatically note the apparent difference that comes from profound transformation: the Christ who appears to the disciples in the upper room passes through their midst in a mysterious manner; Mary Magdalene does not recognize the Risen Christ whom she loves and desperately misses until he calls her by name. The disciples on the road to Emmaus in Luke's Gospel and the fishermen in John's account who strain their eyes to see the stranger on the shore only recognize that it is indeed Jesus as he breaks bread with them and nourishes them in spirit and body.

Conclusion:

If in fact Christian faith in the resurrection of Jesus must be understood as faith in his bodily resurrection, what difference does this make for us—for Christians who in their basic creed affirm: We believe in the resurrection of the body and the life of the world to come.

1. First and foremost, belief in the resurrection affirms something profound about Jesus himself. This was, in fact, the first concern of the early Christians and of the New Testament. By raising Jesus from the dead, God ratified the identity of Jesus as God's unique Son and the

revealer of God's love for the world. Jesus is proven to be triumphant over death. Therefore love is stronger than death, as the Book of Job had proclaimed.

2. But let me give more attention in this setting to what belief in bodily resurrection might mean for us as Christians.

a) Resurrection affirms in a powerful and unimpeachable way the sacredness of creation and of the human body as one of the most complex and majestic expressions of creation. As Christians we affirm that we are an integral part of the created world and our God-given destiny is also shared by creation itself. I believe that this dimension of Christian belief has serious ethical consequences, underscoring Christian responsibility for care of the environment, for a commitment to fostering and protecting life in all its expressions as affirmed in Pope John Paul II's promotion of a "culture of life" to counter the "culture of death" or in Cardinal Bernardin's famous "consistent ethic of life" which extended Catholic care for life to the whole spectrum of human existence from conception to death, and underscores the serious moral concerns that range from abortion to poverty and adequate health care to capital punishment and euthanasia.

b) The radical belief in the sacredness of the human body and the created world, which bodily resurrection implies, also coincides with the sacramental view of the world which is a strong note in Catholic tradition. We believe that God's grace and the divine presence is in fact mediated in and through created realities: the water of baptism, the oil of anointing in the sacrament of the sick, the laying on of hands in ordination, the union of bodies in matrimony, the bread and the wine of the Eucharist. Belief in the efficacy of the sacraments is incompatible with a negative view of the body or creation. Sacraments are resurrection realities—

transforming human life through the mediation of earth symbols made sacred and powerful by the grace of God.

c) Belief in resurrection of the body also affirms technology and science in its exploration of the potency and beauty of the human body and of matter itself. Some years ago, the Jesuit theologian Gerald O'Collins wrote a small book on bodily resurrection and in it he challenged theologians who in their reflection on the meaning of resurrection seemed unable to move beyond the categories either of implausible resuscitation of the human body or of purely psychological or symbolic categories. At a time, he noted, when science was affirming the extraordinary complexity of matter and confessing that an exploration of the structure of matter was as unfinished as the exploration of the physical universe itself, theology was reverting to an impoverished notion of matter and its capacity for transformation. Theological reflection on the meaning of resurrection, he noted, needed more imagination and a more serious engagement with the potency of matter.

d) Belief in the resurrection of the body also affirms that we are not simply alien visitors to our planet with our true home located somewhere else and therefore being detached from our bodiliness and our essential link to creation itself. Traditional Christian theology has sometimes been accused of devaluing creation and of being world-denying, of discounting the quest for justice in this life in favor of a heavenly reward by and by. Our spirituality was seen as detached from or even hostile to the reality of our bodies. The body and everything associated with it was considered base and a potential lure away from an authentic life of the Spirit. It is still true that in some theological circles which focus on the environment, the Bible with its emphasis on human stewardship of creation and the emphasis on redemption is considered as toxic to an authentic theology of the planet and the universe. I think this is a mistake that can lead us to

overlook the extraordinary resource that our biblical and sacramental traditions afford to a theology of creation.

e) Affirmation of creation and responsibility for the environment, as well as a commitment to justice and social equity can find deep roots within our biblical and theological tradition. At the same time faith in the resurrection brings a proper moderation and realistic nuance to the Christian commitment to justice. Pope Benedict XVI has been raising this issue in his last two encyclicals—both of which have reflected deeply on the foundations of Christian faith—in his first, *Deus Caritas Est*, on the nature of Christian love and his most recent, *Spe Salvi*, on Christian hope. The Christian commitment to justice must be constant, comprehensive, and unyielding. But, at the same time, the vision of the Christian expands beyond the here and now to the transcendent world beyond death because of our faith in resurrection. The quest for liberation from oppressive structures, the striving for an end to violence and conflict, the commitment to alleviate hunger and all forms of human suffering is a distinctly Christian impulse, enshrined in the traditional “corporal works of mercy” and the extraordinary institutional commitment of the church throughout the world in health care, disaster relief, and education. At the same time, we know that the full realization of peace and justice will be experienced not through any human structure or strategy but only when, through God’s power, the final grip of death on humanity and the created world is broken forever and when the human family, body and spirit, lives in communion with the God of Jesus Christ. Belief in resurrection should not discount our commitment to justice here and now but offers us the full vision and scope of the justice God intends for humanity.

f) Finally, belief in the resurrection of the body should be seen as the most profound affirmation of the enduring value of human love. Fear of death, in many instances, is

not a fear of physical suffering but a fear of infinite loneliness and isolation from all those we love. It is through our bodies that we humans relate to each other and to the world we know and if our body no longer lives we wonder if our love for each other is just as fragile and limited. Here is the source of our grief and our anxiety about death. Is love stronger than death?—that is the great human question. And if there is an afterlife, is it worth living? Will there be any meaningful continuity between the joy I have known in the love of another person and the joy I have experienced in the world around me with the experience of life projected beyond this life?

Belief in the resurrection of the dead and belief in bodily resurrection affirm that indeed love is stronger than death and that the consuming experience of our destiny is communion with a God of love and with all those whose love we have known.

If Christ be not raised we are, in Paul's words, the most pitiable of all people. But Christian faith affirms: the tomb is empty. The bones of Jesus exist but they are part of a transformed bodily being whose beauty, mobility, connection to the universe and to the God of the universe is beyond our ken and only imaginable in small part through the eyes of faith. That destiny that we see now only darkly as if through a mirror is, because of God's infinite redeeming love, also ours.

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