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*The Resurrection of the Body*



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# *The Resurrection of the Body*

A fundamental part of God's revelation about man's destiny is the resurrection of the body. This revealed doctrine has had a tremendous positive influence on the Christian conception of man and the substantial unity of his body and soul.

## *The Resurrection in the Old Testament*

God, as an infinitely wise teacher, used a progressive pedagogy in revealing Himself to Israel. He began with what is most sensible—hope in temporal blessings and rewards—to gradually lead them to aspire to invisible eternal and heavenly blessings. Nevertheless, even though the Old Testament is relatively muted with regard to the promise of eternal life and the Resurrection, it is not completely silent in this regard. Faith in the Last Things and the Resurrection of the dead is necessarily implicit in Israel's faith in God's omnipotence, fidelity, and providence over the world. God cannot abandon Israel, nor her faithful souls. God cannot allow injustice and suffering to have the last word. This is impossible.<sup>1</sup>

Furthermore, the very fact of Israel's faith in God's saving power leads necessarily to the hope that God will not abandon them to the ultimate defeat of a death from which there is no return. For example, the faith expressed in Ps 18(17):2-6 is utterly incompatible with a lack of hope in the Resurrection: "The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. I call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised, and I am saved from my enemies. The cords of death encompassed me, the torrents of perdition assailed me; the cords of Sheol entangled me, the snares of death confronted me. In my distress I called upon the Lord; to my God I cried for help. From his temple he heard my voice, and my cry to him reached his ears." Could the God who is Israel's impregnable rock and fortress, the horn of salvation, allow all Israel to be utterly defeated by death and corruption?

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 992 nicely expresses the initially implicit way in which God's revelation to Israel contained the resurrection:

God revealed the resurrection of the dead to his people progressively. Hope in the bodily resurrection of the dead

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<sup>1</sup> See CCC 992: "God revealed the resurrection of the dead to his people progressively. Hope in the bodily resurrection of the dead established itself as a consequence intrinsic to faith in God as creator of the whole man, soul and body. The creator of heaven and earth is also the one who faithfully maintains his covenant with Abraham and his posterity. It was in this double perspective that faith in the resurrection came to be expressed."

established itself as a consequence intrinsic to faith in God as creator of the whole man, soul and body. The creator of heaven and earth is also the one who faithfully maintains his covenant with Abraham and his posterity. It was in this double perspective that faith in the resurrection came to be expressed.

In other words, faith in the resurrection is implicit in two of the most fundamental tenets of Israel's faith: God is the creator of heaven and earth, of man's body and soul, and the faith that God is absolutely faithful to His covenant to Israel.

Jesus beautifully manifests this implicit revelation of the resurrection in His dialogue with the Saducees who denied the Resurrection:

But that the dead are raised, even Moses showed, in the passage about the bush, where he calls the Lord the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. Now he is not God of the dead, but of the living; for all live to him."

The promise of the resurrection, however, is also explicitly taught in the Old Testament. It appears in Isaiah 26:19: "Thy dead shall live, their bodies shall rise. O dwellers in the dust, awake and sing for joy! For thy dew is a dew of light, and on the land of the shades thou wilt let it fall." The resurrection is also hinted at in the canticle of Hannah in 1 Sam 2:6: "The Lords kills and brings to life; he brings down to Sheol and raises up." Even more explicit is Dan 12:2-3:

And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.

The word "many" here should not be understood in contrast to "all," but precisely to indicate the great multitude of human beings. The perfect spiritualization of the glorious resurrected body will not be present in the damned, who will also receive back their bodies, not for glory and harmony, but rather so that the body in which they sinned may share in their punishment.

The greatest Biblical expression of Jewish faith in the resurrection of the body is found in the second book of Maccabees. This faith gave hope to the Maccabean martyrs of the persecution of King Antiochus. In 2 Macc 7:9-14 we read of the terrible tortures of seven brothers who confess their faith in the resurrection to their persecutors:

"You accursed wretch, you dismiss us from this present life, but the King of the universe will raise us up to an everlasting renewal of life, because we have died for his laws." After him, the third was the victim of their sport. When it was

demanded, he quickly put out his tongue and courageously stretched forth his hands, and said nobly, “I got these from Heaven, and because of his laws I disdain them, and from him I hope to get them back again.” As a result the king himself and those with him were astonished at the young man’s spirit, for he regarded his sufferings as nothing. When he too had died, they maltreated and tortured the fourth in the same way. And when he was near death, he said, “One cannot but choose to die at the hands of men and to cherish the hope that God gives of being raised again by him. But for you there will be no resurrection to life!”

The mother who was forced to witness the most cruel torture of her seven sons exhorted them in the midst of their torment:

I do not know how you came into being in my womb. It was not I who gave you life and breath, nor I who set in order the elements within each of you. Therefore the Creator of the world, who shaped the beginning of man and devised the origin of all things, will in his mercy give life and breath back to you again, since you now forget yourselves for the sake of his laws.

We can also see from the Acts of the Apostles that the resurrection of the body was a tenet of the faith of the Pharisees, although rejected by the sect of the Sadducees.<sup>2</sup> In Acts 23:6-8, Paul makes use of this disparity of faith between the Pharisees and the Sadducees to arouse sympathy for his cause among the Pharisees:

But when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, “Brethren, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees; with respect to the hope and the resurrection of the dead I am on trial.” And when he had said this, a dissension arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees; and the assembly was divided. For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor angel, nor spirit; but the Pharisees acknowledge them all.

The faith of the Pharisees in the resurrection naturally became a fundamental tenet of the faith of rabbinical Judaism. Moses Maimonides included faith in the resurrection of the dead as the last of the thirteen articles of Jewish faith: “The dead will rise at the time set by God.” Then with regard to all thirteen articles, he writes: “No one can be a true Jew if he does not profess these articles as true. Whoever denies even one of these articles is a heretic.”<sup>3</sup>

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2 See Acts 23:6-8: “But when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, “Brethren, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees; with respect to the hope and the resurrection of the dead I am on trial.” And when he had said this, a dissension arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees; and the assembly was divided. For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor angel, nor spirit; but the Pharisees acknowledge them all.”

3 These principles are set forth at greater length in Maimonides’ commentary on Sanhedrin, chapter 10. See *Maimonides’ Commentary on the Mishnah: Tractate Sanhedrin*, trans. Fred Rosner (New York: Sepher-Hermon Press, 1981), 151–57.

Modern Judaism, especially in its more liberal forms, certainly puts less stress on the resurrection of the dead.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, the resurrection has a central part in the most solemn prayers of the synagogue, such as the ancient Amidah, recited standing, in which the second blessing (Gevurot) praises God for His great power as manifested in the resurrection of the dead:

You are mighty forever, my Lord; You resurrect the dead; You are powerful to save. He sustains the living with loving kindness, resurrects the dead with great mercy, supports the falling, heals the sick, releases the bound, and fulfills His trust to those who sleep in the dust. Who is like You, mighty One! And who can be compared to You, King, who brings death and restores life, and causes deliverance to spring forth! You are trustworthy to revive the dead. Blessed are You Lord, who revives the dead.<sup>5</sup>

Numerous Talmudic prayers also speak of God’s future resurrection of the dead as the consummation of His work of creation and judgment. The Talmud, for example, gives a blessing to be recited when one enters a cemetery:

Blessed art thou, Adonai, our God, king of the universe,  
Who formed you in judgment,  
Who nourished and sustained you in judgment,  
Who brought death on you in judgment,  
Who knows the number of you all,  
And will hereafter restore you to life in judgment.  
Blessed art thou, Adonai,  
Who quickens the dead.<sup>6</sup>

Another Talmudic prayer tying together creation and resurrection is part of daily morning prayer in the Jewish prayerbook (Siddur):

My God, the soul you have placed in me is pure.  
You it was who created it,  
You formed it,  
You blew it into me,  
You guard it within me,  
You will take it from me,  
And return it to me, in time-to-be.<sup>7</sup>

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4 See, for example, Abba Hillel Silver, *Where Judaism Differs: An Inquiry into the Distinctiveness of Judaism* (New York: Collier Books, 1989), 265–84. But see p. 277: “Nevertheless the doctrine of resurrection, and its associated eschatological elements to which the Jews added nothing original, gained ground rapidly from the period of the Hasmonean struggle onward, and came to be firmly established in Rabbinic Judaism.”

5 Online translation from [http://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/867674/jewish/Translation.htm](http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/867674/jewish/Translation.htm)

6 *In The Language of Faith: Selected Jewish Prayers*, ed. Nahum N. Glatzer (New York: Schocken Books, 1947), 92.

7 Talmud, Berakhot 60b, in *The Language of Faith: Selected Jewish Prayers*, 82.

### ***The Resurrection in the New Testament***

The New Testament gives a clearer and more unequivocal presentation of this key doctrine. We have seen that Christ defended the resurrection of the body in controversy with the Sadducees, as reported in the Synoptic Gospels, Mt 22:24-30, Mk 12:18-25, and Luke 20:27-38:

There came to him some Sadducees, those who say that there is no resurrection, and they asked him a question, saying, "Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies, having a wife but no children, the man must take the wife and raise up children for his brother. Now there were seven brothers; the first took a wife, and died without children; and the second and the third took her, and likewise all seven left no children and died. Afterward the woman also died. In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife will the woman be? For the seven had her as wife." And Jesus said to them, "The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage; but those who are accounted worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage, for they cannot die any more, because they are equal to angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection.

The disdain of the Sadducees with regard to the resurrection was naturally felt by all those affected by the dualist Platonic conception of man according to which the body is merely a prison of the soul. This disdain was increased in those forms of Gnostic dualism which regarded matter as the source of evil.

Jesus also taught explicitly on the resurrection in the His bread of life discourse in John 6:37-40:

All that the Father gives me will come to me; and him who comes to me I will not cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me; and this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up at the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that every one who sees the Son and believes in him should have eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.

St. Paul proclaimed the resurrection of the dead in his first letter to the Thessalonians (4:13-16), on account of their excessive sorrow over those who had passed away:

But we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. . . . For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel's call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

### ***Christ's Resurrection and the General Resurrection***

Christ not only taught in clear words about the future resurrection of the dead, but, more importantly, He taught this truth through His own Resurrection, which is the exemplar of the resurrection of the faithful. Christ rose

from the dead to be "the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be pre-eminent" (Col 1:18).

The exemplar value of Christ's Resurrection is given great emphasis by St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 15. As some of the Corinthians denied the future resurrection of the body, St. Paul shows the intrinsic connection between Christ's resurrection and our future resurrection. After giving the historical testimony of the witnesses of Christ's Resurrection, St. Paul goes on to address and refute the heretical interpretation of the Corinthians, showing its extraordinary gravity:

Now if Christ is preached as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised; if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified of God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised. If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men most to be pitied. But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. . . . (1 Cor 15:12-23).

Christ's Resurrection and the general resurrection of the just are so intimately connected that denial of one implies a denial of the other. For everything worked by Christ is for the sake of His Mystical Body, the Church. Christ's Resurrection makes no sense if His Church is not to share in His bodily glory. Christ's Resurrection is the exemplar, figure, and cause of our future resurrection.

Precisely for this reason Christ's Resurrection had to precede the general resurrection. His Resurrection is the first fruit, harbinger, pledge, and seed of the future general resurrection. It is the foundation on which the entire faith and hope of the Church is built.

The early Fathers of the Church also had to defend the resurrection of the body against the natural incomprehension of Hellenistic culture.<sup>8</sup> In doing so, they based themselves on the substantial union between body and soul. In this regard, the Aristotelian conception of the union of body and soul was much more congenial to Christian Revelation.

A Christian Apologist at the beginning of the third century has written:

For God calls even the flesh to the resurrection and promises it eternal life. To announce the good news of salvation to man was in effect to announce it to the flesh. For what is

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, St. Augustine, *The City of God*, book XXII, chapters 4, 12, 26-28.

man if not a reasonable being composed of soul and body? Shall we say that the soul in itself is the man? No, it is the soul of the man. And the body alone—is that the man? By no means; we should rather say that it is the body of the man. Since, then, neither soul alone nor body alone are man, but the thing called man arises out of their union, when God called man to the resurrection and the life, He called no mere part of man but the whole man, body and soul together in one.<sup>9</sup>

### John Paul II on the Resurrection

John Paul II has treated the resurrection of the body in his General Audiences known as the Theology of the Body. He sees it as a key for theological anthropology:

One should recall that the truth about the resurrection had a *key meaning for the formation of theological anthropology as a whole*, which could simply be considered “*anthropology of the resurrection.*”

John Paul II continues:

Reflection about the resurrection led Thomas Aquinas in his metaphysical (and simultaneously theological) anthropology to abandon Plato’s philosophical conception on the relation between the soul and the body and to draw near to Aristotle’s view.<sup>10</sup> In fact, the resurrection attests, at least indirectly, that in the whole of the human composite, the body is not, contrary to Plato, only temporarily linked with the soul (as its earthly “prison,” as Plato maintained), but that together with the soul it constitutes the unity and integrity of the human being. This is precisely what Aristotle taught, in contrast to Plato. When St. Thomas in his anthropology accepted Aristotle’s conception, he did so because he considered the truth about the resurrection. In fact, the truth about the resurrection clearly affirms that man’s eschatological perfection and happiness cannot be understood as a state of the soul alone, separated (according to Plato, liberated) from the body, but must be understood as *the definitively and perfectly “integrated” state of man* brought about by such a union of the soul with the body that it definitively qualifies and assures this perfect integrity.<sup>11</sup>

The substantial union between body and soul in man is intrinsically linked with the doctrine of the resurrection of the body,<sup>12</sup> for it is clear that man’s ultimate supernatural beatitude cannot be achieved at the expense of the integral

9 *De Resurrectione* VIII. Quoted in Etienne Gilson, *The Spirit of Mediaeval Philosophy*, p. 171.

10 See *Summa of Theology*, Supplementum, q. 75, a. 1: “Others [such as Plato] said that the entire nature of man is seated in the soul, so that the soul makes use of the body as an instrument, or as a sailor uses his ship: wherefore according to this opinion, it follows that if happiness is attained by the soul alone, man would not be balked in his natural desire for happiness, and so there is no need to hold the resurrection. But the Philosopher [Aristotle] sufficiently destroys this foundation (De Anima ii,2), where he shows that the soul is united to the body as form to matter. Hence it is clear that if man cannot be happy in this life, we must of necessity hold the resurrection.”

11 General Audience of December 2, 1981, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, (66: 6) pp. 390.

12 We can argue from the doctrine of the resurrection to the substantial union of body and soul, or vice versa, from the substantial

perfection of his nature. Beatitude for man’s soul alone would still leave unsatisfied the natural desire for the soul to be reunited with the body, and to perfectly govern and “permeate” it.

### Qualities of the Resurrected Body

In the Resurrection, the body will be “glorified.” This state of the glorified body consists in the complete and perfect subordination of the body to the spirit, and permeation of the spirit in the body, such that the body will be a perfect manifestation of the spirit, and perfectly docile to it.<sup>13</sup>

St. Paul speaks of the glorious state of the resurrected bodies in 1 Cor 15:35-54, according to the exemplar of the Resurrection of Christ:

But some one will ask, “How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?” You foolish man! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. And what you sow is not the body which is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body. For not all flesh is alike, but there is one kind for men, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish. There are celestial bodies and there are terrestrial bodies; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory.

What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body.... For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable nature must put on the imperishable, and this mortal nature must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.”

John Paul II describes this state as “a perfect spiritualization, in which the possibility of “another law at war with the law of my mind” (Rom 7:23) is completely eliminated.”<sup>14</sup> He continues:

union of body and soul we can make an argument of fittingness for the resurrection of the body.

13 John Paul II interprets the meaning of the “spiritual body” as “*the perfect sensitivity of the senses, their perfect harmonization with the activity of the human spirit* in truth and in freedom. The ‘natural body,’ which is the earthly antithesis of the ‘spiritual body,’ by contrast indicates sensuality as a force that often undermines man inasmuch as, by living ‘in the knowledge of good and evil,’ he is often urged or pushed, as it were, toward evil” (*Man and Woman He Created Them*, pp. 410-411, 72:4).

14 See St. Augustine, *City of God*, book XXII, chapter 24: “How wonderful will be that body which will be completely subdued to the spirit, will receive from the spirit all that it needs for its life, and will need no other nourishment! It will not be animal; it will be a spiritual body, possessing the substance of flesh, but untainted by any carnal corruption.”

In fact, in the composite, psychosomatic being that is man, perfection cannot consist in a reciprocal opposition of the spirit and the body, but *in a deep harmony between them, in safeguarding the primacy of the spirit*. In the “other world,” this primacy will be realized, and it will be manifested in a perfect spontaneity without any opposition on the part of the body. Nevertheless, this should not be understood as a definitive “victory” of the spirit over the body. The resurrection will consist in the perfect participation of all that is bodily in man in all that is spiritual in him. At the same time, it will consist in the perfect realization of what is personal in man.<sup>15</sup>

### ***The Resurrection and Marriage***

Christ answers the question of the Sadducees about marriage in the resurrection by stating that “those who are accounted worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage” (Lk 20:35). Human marriage will not continue as an institution in the Resurrection. It is interesting to reflect on this revealed truth. Why will marriage no longer be a fitting state for man? Are not the “sons of the resurrection” still made for interpersonal communion? Do not their bodies retain their spousal meaning?

Indeed, man’s perfection and beatitude is essentially linked to the fullest realization of interpersonal communion and love. Man’s beatitude cannot fail to be achieved through a spousal gift of self which will involve the whole person: body and soul. So why will man’s eschatological beatitude bypass human marriage?

The answer, of course, is that man’s eschatological beatitude can only consist in the perfect spousal union with the one Beloved, seen *face to face*. Human marriage in Christ is a *sacrament* (efficacious sacred sign) for God’s union with man, individually and socially in the Body of Christ. In the eschatological perfection of man there will be no more room for the sacramental economy involving the mediation of efficacious sacred sensible signs. In the Resurrection God will be seen face to face, and so it will not be necessary to represent the divine through sacred signs. The sacraments represent and veil the divine in the time of faith of this earthly life.

In human marriage, the conjugal love of the spouses characterized by the marks of fidelity, exclusivity, indissolubility until death, and openness to life, is a sacred sign of the spousal love of God for His Bride. In the resurrection, this spousal love of God will be experienced directly without the mediation of the sacred sign.

In the Resurrection, the sons and daughters of the resurrection will eternally celebrate the nuptials of the Lamb with His entire mystical Body. In Revelation 21:1-3 we read:

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first

<sup>15</sup> *Man and Woman He Created Them*, pp. 391-392, General Audience of December 9, 1981 (67: 2).

heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband; and I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them.”

When God is seen face to face, the perfect and absolutely beatifying mutual gift of self will be made possible between the human person and God. This gift of self will include the whole man, and thus also the glorified body in the resurrected saints. Thus the perfect fulfillment of the person will be accomplished in a virginal espousal with God. John Paul II expresses this masterfully:

The eschatological situation in which “they will take neither wife nor husband” has its solid foundation in the future state of the personal subject when, as a consequence of the vision of God “face to face,” *a love of such depth and power of concentration on God himself* will be born in the person that it *completely absorbs the person’s whole psychosomatic subjectivity*.<sup>16</sup>

However, if the institution of human marriage will not be present in the Resurrection, does this mean that the eschatological dimension of interpersonal communion is exclusively realized between the soul and God, without interpersonal communion on the human level? Assuredly not, for Catholic doctrine professes belief in the communion of saints. Since the nuptials of the Lamb are realized with the entire mystical Body of Christ, it follows that all the members of the mystical Body will be united among themselves with the closest bond of interpersonal communion, just as they are united with their Head and Bridegroom. The Bride of Christ in the resurrection is the entire Body of Christ, most intimately united together in the bond and communion of charity. John Paul II states:

The concentration of knowledge of knowledge and love on God himself in the trinitarian communion of Persons can find a beatifying response in those who will become sharers in the “other world” only *through realizing reciprocal communion commensurate with created persons*. And for this reason we profess faith in the “communion of saints” (*communio sanctorum*) and profess it in organic connection with faith in the “resurrection of the body.”... We should think of the reality of the “other world” in the categories of the rediscovery of a new, perfect subjectivity of each person and at the same time of the *rediscovery* of a new, *perfect intersubjectivity of all*.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 395 (68:3). See also p. 419 (75:1): “This way of existing as a human being (male and female) points out the eschatological “virginity” of the risen man, in which, I would say, the absolute and eternal spousal meaning of the glorified body will be revealed in union with God himself, by seeing him “face to face,” glorified moreover through the union of a perfect intersubjectivity that will unite all the “sharers in the other world,” men and women, in the mystery of the communion of saints.”

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 396 (68:4).

### ***The Resurrection and the Eucharist***

As we have seen, St. Paul teaches that the Resurrection of Christ is the exemplar and model of the resurrection of the members of Christ's Mystical Body. If we become living members of Christ through Baptism and the Eucharist and persevere in Him until the end, we shall share in the glory of His Resurrection.

Christ Himself, in His sermon at Capernaum in Jn 6:50-52 tells us that worthy participation in the Eucharist, Christ's own Body, is the sacramental cause of our future participation in Christ's Resurrection:

This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that a man may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will live for ever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh.

Before the Resurrection and the Last Judgment, the celebration of the Eucharist is the celebration of the "nuptials of the Lamb" with His Church, in which the Body of Christ is joined ever more closely to its Head and Bridegroom. In the glorious Resurrection, all sacramental veils will be removed, and the spousal union and likeness signified in the Eucharist will be finally manifested for all eternity, in the "divinization" of both body and soul of the members of Christ, in which God will be "all in all" (1 Cor 15:28).