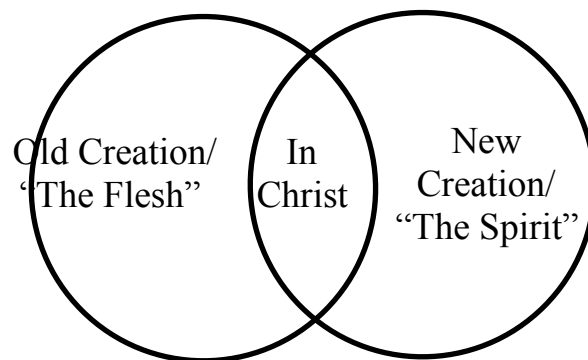


The Flesh, the Spirit, and the Resurrection (5th Sunday of Lent, Year A)

Romans 8:8-11—You Are Not in “the Flesh”

⁸ [T]hose who are *in the flesh* cannot please God. ⁹ But *you are not in the flesh, you are in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you*. Any one who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. ¹⁰ But if Christ is in you, although your bodies are dead because of sin, your spirits are alive because of righteousness. ¹¹ *If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit who dwells in you.* (Romans 8:8-11)

1. The Flesh (Greek *sarx*) = this fallen world of sin and death (Rom 8:8)
2. The Spirit (Greek *pneumatōs*) = the new creation of righteousness and life (Rom 8:8)



3. Works of the Flesh vs. Fruits of the Spirit:

¹⁹ Now *the works of the flesh* are plain: *fornication* (Greek *porneia*), *impurity, licentiousness*, ²⁰ *idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit*, ²¹ *envy, drunkenness, carousing, and the like*. I warn you, as I warned you before, that *those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God*. ²² But *the fruit of the Spirit* is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ *gentleness, self-control*; against such there is no law. ²⁴ And *those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires*. ²⁵ If we *live by the Spirit*, let us also walk by the Spirit. (Gal 5:19-25)

4. Resurrection of “the Body” (Greek *sōma*): through power of “the Spirit” (Rom 8:11)

The Living Tradition

John Chrysostom: “So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.” (Rom 8:11) What then? Are we, it will be said, to cut our bodies in pieces to please God, and to

make our escape from the flesh? and would you have us be homicides, and so lead us to virtue? *You see what inconsistencies are gendered by taking the words literally. For by “the flesh” in this passage, he does not mean the body, or the essence of the body, but that life which is fleshly and worldly*, and uses self-indulgence and extravagance to the full, so making the entire man flesh. For [just] as they that have the wings of the Spirit, make the body also spiritual, so do they who bound off from this, and are the slaves of the belly, and of pleasure, make the soul also flesh, not that they change the essence of it, but that they mar its noble birth. And this mode of speaking is to be met with in many parts of the Old Testament also, to signify by flesh the gross and earthly life, which is entangled in pleasures... (John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Romans* 13; trans. NPNF1 11:434-35)

Again, [Paul] touches the point of the Resurrection, since this was the most encouraging hope to the hearer... Suffer not thy body then to live in this world, that it may live then! Make it die, that it die not. For if it keep living, it will not live: but if it die, then shall it live. And this is the case with resurrection in general. *For it must die first and be buried, and then become immortal. But this has been done in the Font. It has therefore had first its crucifixion and burial, and then been raised.* This has also happened with the Lord’s Body. For that also was crucified and buried and rose again. This then let us too be doing: let us keep continually mortifying it in its works. I do not mean in its substance—far be it from me—but in its inclinations towards evil doings. (John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Romans* 13; trans. NPNF1 11:436)

Questions for Discussion and Reflection (5th Sunday of Lent, Year A)

1. What does Paul mean when he speaks about “the flesh”? What is the difference between “the flesh” and “the body” for Paul?

2. What are the “works of the flesh” and how are they different from “the fruits of the Spirit”?

For Further Reading

1. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans* (trans. F. R. Larcher, O.P.; eds. J. Mortensen and E. Alarcón; Lander, WY: Aquinas Institute, 2012).
2. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistle to the Romans*, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Volume 11 (ed. Philip Schaff; repr.; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994).