

# The Tenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

(Year B)

<i>First Reading</i>	Genesis 3:9-15
<i>Response</i>	With the Lord there is mercy, and fullness of redemption.
<i>Psalm</i>	Psalm 130:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8
<i>Second Reading</i>	2 Corinthians 4:13-5:1
<i>Gospel Acclamation</i>	Now the ruler of the world will be driven out, says the Lord; and when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself.
<i>Gospel</i>	Mark 3:20-35

The 10th Sunday of Ordinary Time for Year B continues the Church's journey through Paul's rich and beautiful meditation, known as the Second Letter to the Corinthians. And here we're reading from 2 Corinthians 4:13 and following. It says this:

Since we have the same spirit of faith as he had who wrote, "I believed, and so I spoke," we too believe, and so we speak, knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence. For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.

So we do not lose heart. Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed every day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, because we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen; for the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal. For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all Bible citations/quotations herein are from *The Holy Bible: Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition*. New York: National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA, 1994.

So as I've mentioned before in other videos, Paul's 2nd letter to the Corinthians is very much about human suffering and about the trials and tribulations that Paul himself is undergoing at the time of the composition of this letter. He's reflecting on the meaning and the mystery of Christian suffering and of his own sufferings in particular, and how those sufferings play a role in the spread of the Gospel and in the salvation and redemption of the world. So in the previous verses, Paul was reflecting on how Christians are always carrying about in their bodies the suffering and the dying of Jesus, and now he shifts his emphasis to looking forward to the resurrection of Christ and how those who have died with Christ will also share in his resurrection.

So a few points about the passage that stand out. The first one is that Paul uses the fact of Jesus's resurrection as the ground for the hope of our own resurrection. Now this might seem like it's an obvious kind of thing, that he doesn't necessarily need to do it, but actually it's really a crucial thing. He'll do it elsewhere in First Corinthians as well, because although some of the Corinthians believe "ohh yes, Jesus was raised from the dead", they have a hard time translating that into a hope for their own bodily resurrection from the dead. It can be easy to think, well, yeah, that's something God did for Jesus, but is he going to actually do it for me? And Paul's trying to make sure that the Corinthians know that their hope of the resurrection is just as sure and just as true as Christ's own bodily resurrection from the dead. And I think that that's actually probably something true for us. It's easy to say, you know, I believe in the resurrection of the body and the life of the world to come at Mass, say, when you're professing the Creed. It's another thing to truly hope and believe in your own resurrection, when you're suffering or when you're looking death in the face. Maybe you have a terminal illness or maybe you have a family member who's going to be suffering and dying, and you can see that they are in their last days. Okay, that's when the need for hope in the truth, not just of Jesus's resurrection, but of our bodily resurrection, really becomes an essential part of the Christian life. And so Paul here is exhorting the Corinthians to remember that the same God who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with Paul and the other Saints into the presence of the risen Lord. So it's a very powerful affirmation of the Christian hope for the bodily resurrection.

And Paul says all of this is done for their sake:

so that as grace extends to more and more people it may

increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.

This is interesting because in that expression there, thanksgiving, the Greek word is *eucharistia*. So it's almost as if Paul is describing the fact that as the grace extends more and more, it also increases the *eucharistia*. Now this could just be a general reference to the thanksgiving that people give to God for the hope of the resurrection. That might be what he means. But it also might be a subtle allusion to the offering of thanksgiving that takes place during the Lord's Supper. Because quickly, early on in the Church, the Lord's Supper that Paul refers to is going to be referred to as the *Eucharistia*, as the Eucharist, as the act of Thanksgiving. A kind of formal, communal, liturgical Thanksgiving. And so I can't help but wonder if he's talking about also the spread of *eucharistias*, of the offerings of the Eucharist, of the celebration of the Eucharist in the early Church as the Gospel itself spreads. In any case, whatever his exact meaning, his point for the Corinthians is not to lose heart. So in the face of trials, in the face of suffering, in the face of death, we don't lose heart because although our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed every day.

Now here's one of those examples of where we have a passage in which I think the Revised Standard Version is understandable, but it's not literal enough and it is a little misleading, or at least you lose something in translation. When Paul says outer nature and inner nature, the literal Greek is our outward man and our inner man. So the Greek word is *anthrōpos*. It's the same word we use for anthropology, the study of man, the study of human beings. So he doesn't actually use the Greek word nature, which would be *ousia* in Greek, being or substance. He uses the word *anthrōpos*, which is pretty common word for man. So when he uses this language of outer man and inner man, I think the best way to understand it is actually in terms of the old and new creation that I've talked about elsewhere in Paul's letters, right? Where he will use the figure of Adam and the figure of Christ as kind of representative figures for the old sphere of reality, the old creation that was under the power of sin and death, and of the new creation, which is under the power of the Holy Spirit, and which is tied in a singular way to the risen Christ, to the resurrected Christ, to Christ who is the new Adam.

So we have our outer man, which is our mortal bodies, the “jars of clay” that he mentions earlier in the letter, which is passing away. It's wasting away. It's still experiencing the effects of the fall of the first man in suffering, and then ultimately in death. However, there is an inner man, which is Christ living in us, which is being renewed every day, and which is growing and increasing in its

grace and its strength as we head toward the glory of the resurrection. So what Paul's doing here is drawing a contrast between our life as members of the old creation and then our life as members of the new creation. And that's why he basically says in this very powerful statement, "this slight momentary affliction." That's how he describes our life here on earth:

This slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, because we look not to the things that are seen...

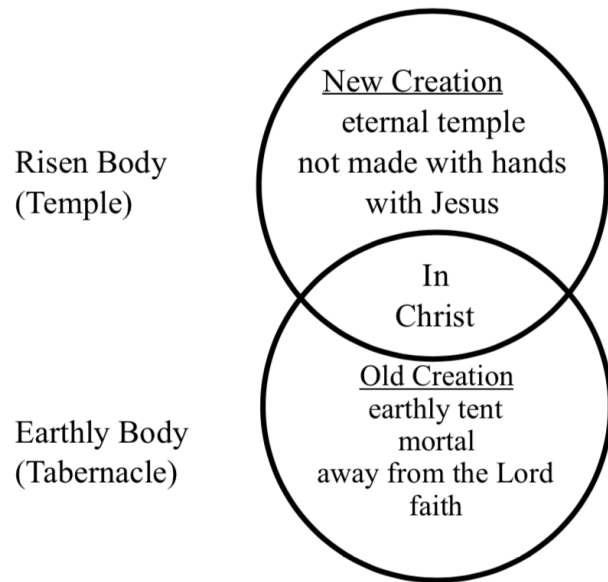
Like our outer body, our mortal frame, this earthly body.

...but to the things that are unseen.

Namely, our resurrected body, our glorious body in the eternal life of the new creation. And you can see that this is what he means by outer and inner man, because that final verse in chapter 5, verse one:

For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

What is he talking about there? This is really interesting. So what Paul's doing is he's drawing a contrast between two images that anyone familiar with the Old Testament would have known: the portable Tabernacle of Moses and then the permanent Temple of Solomon, right? So what he's saying here is our earthly body is like a Tabernacle. Like, the spirit of God does dwell within it, but it is impermanent. It's going to come to an end. Whereas our resurrected body is going to be like the Temple. It's a permanent dwelling place of the Spirit of God that God is keeping reserved for us eternal in the heavens. So here, basically what Paul is doing is he is using the imagery of the old and new creation, which is usually a kind of linear model, of an old creation which is then followed by a new creation, but he is, in a sense, flipping it. So now instead of the old creation and a new creation along a linear line, he is talking about earthly and heavenly realities, and a more vertical axis. So if you look, I have a chart for you here that shows that the earthly bodies, like the Tabernacle, it was like a portable temple, and it is tied to the old creation. It is mortal, we are away from the Lord while we are in this earthly body. We need faith to believe in things we cannot see, those invisible realities.



But the risen body he compares to a Temple. It is going to be our permanent dwelling place. It is eternal, it is not made with hands. It is not a jar of clay, but we will be with Jesus forever in that eternal reality, eternal in the heavens.

So this is a beautiful reflection from St. Paul on the hope of the resurrection of the body and the life of the world to come, in which Paul uses the imagery of the Tabernacle and the tent to give the Corinthians, to whom he's writing, hope that although they might be suffering, although they're still journeying toward the Promised Land, so to speak, in their earthly tabernacles of their mortal bodies, eventually that earthly Tabernacle, that earthly tent, will give way to an eternal temple, a body not made with hands, like the risen body of Jesus himself, that will dwell forever with Jesus in the eternal Kingdom of God.

And so I'm going to end with a passage from the Living Tradition in which St. Thomas reflects on what Paul means by being renewed every day. Like, what does that exactly mean to be renewed every day as we head toward that eternal weight of glory in that resurrected body. And this is what St. Thomas says:

According to the judgment of spiritual men, the mind is called the inward man. But according to appearance, the most important thing is the outward body with its senses. Hence, according to the judgment of those who consider only bodily and sense-perceptible things and savor earthly things, and whose god is the belly, the body with the sense is called the

outward man... [W]hen such a human nature gets rid of the results of sin, it is said to be renewed. Such riddance begins in the saints here, but is perfectly completed in heaven.<sup>2</sup>

So effectively what Thomas is saying here is that most people are just concerned with the body and concerned with the outward senses. But what we need to realize as Christians is that the inner man is the most important part of us, because the renewal of the inner man actually has to do with ridding ourselves of sins. So that every day, as we grow in virtue and grow in holiness, we're becoming more and more like, more and more an image of the glory of the resurrected body which will be perfected in heaven. So in other words, to go back to Paul's metaphor, part of the journey toward the heavenly promised land and the eternal temple of that resurrected body that will be given to members of Christ in the new creation and in the resurrection, is purifying the earthly Tabernacle, purifying the earthly temple of sin so that it might be made new each day in anticipation of the time when it will no longer need to be renewed. Because it will be made perfect, it will be perfected by God in the final resurrection of the dead.

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<sup>2</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on 2 Corinthians* no. 154; trans. F. R. Larcher.