

Acts 10:34-43

Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24

1 Corinthians 15:19-26

Luke 24:1-12

EASTER SERMON PREACHED BY THE REVEREND ALISTAIR SO, S.O.SC,
RECTOR OF ALL HALLOWS PARISH, SOUTH RIVER, IN DAVIDSONVILLE,
MARYLAND, ON THE FEAST OF THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD AND
SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST, MARCH 31, 2013, AT ALL HALLOWS CHAPEL AND THE
BRICK CHURCH.

In the Name of the Triune God Whose Power is manifested by the Resurrection of His Son, Jesus the Christ. Amen.

In his book, *The Innocence of Objects*, Nobel Laureate Orhan Pamuk wrote, "[*the measure of a museum's success*] should be its capacity to reveal the humanity of individuals."

I've been to such a museum.

On a trip to Los Angeles, we visited the Museum of Jurassic Technology, which maybe described as a museum of performance art. It is a museum that focused on a curious and wide-ranging collection of relics and artifacts, with an emphasis on those that demonstrate unusual technological qualities.

A lot of the exhibits contained pseudoscience that attempted to explain certain phenomena. The purpose of them was not to show us flawless science, but to show us part of the story for the quest of truth by humanity.

I was particularly drawn to an exhibit about **Nikolai Fyodorovich Fyodorov** (Russian: Никола́й Фёдорович Фёдоров; surname also Anglicized as "Fedorov") (June 9, 1829–December 28, 1903), a Russian Orthodox Christian philosopher, who advocated life extension, physical immortality and resurrection of the dead, using scientific methods.

According to Fedorov, biological evolution is geared toward increased intelligence, and to evolve or develop best, humankind must direct intelligence where our reason and morality dictate. For Federov, the fact that we all have to die is the most obvious indicator of the yet imperfect, contradictory nature of humankind. So, he argues that the struggle against death can become the most natural cause uniting all peoples of the Earth, regardless of their nationality, race, citizenship or wealth (he calls this the Common Cause).

Other thinkers had come up with similar assertions, but Fedorov took it a step further and maintained that the resurrection of the dead should become the subject of comprehensive scientific inquiry.

I had thought all of that was nineteenth century style out of the box thinking until I was interviewed by the Pew Research Center about the Episcopal Church's view on downloading human minds to computers and robots. Apparently, that is becoming a technological possibility. Perhaps, that will become a sort of twenty-first century resurrection.

Oftentimes, when we talk about the resurrection in the church, we think of Easter; we think of Jesus rising from the tomb. We may also remember, from reading the Scriptures and reciting the Nicene Creed, that "we look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come." But what does that mean? When and how would it happen? Resurrection seems like something we acknowledge, but don't quite know what to make of it.

If we really think about the implications of resurrection, many different thoughts may come to mind. For one thing, looking at Jesus breaking out of the tomb, especially in the icon on the back of our bulletin, resurrection seems to be a high energy, high impact undertaking. And after having had services all week since Palm Sunday, many of us feel like that the traditional "Rest in Peace" after death is quite enough, thank you and quite very and tranquil in fact! But that "Rise in Glory" part just seems too exhausting!

The selection from St. Paul's First Letter to the Church in Corinth contains a concise Christian treatise on resurrection. The apostle lays out the reasons why resurrection, both Christ's and the general resurrection yet to come, is important to us.

First, he says that if, as Christians, our only hope is just in this life, those outside the faith should take pity on us. For our entire belief system is based on the Resurrection of Christ. If that had not happened, we would have merely been a nice ethical society with no future.

Second, he makes a theological point based on the Book of Genesis, that death became a reality for humanity because of the disobedience of our First Parents in the Garden of Eden. In his words, "*death came through a human being.*" Now, with Christ, "*the resurrection of the dead also came through a human being.*"

Finally, St Paul points ahead to the coming age of the resurrection that will occur at Christ's Second Coming, when those who belong to him will be resurrected. Christ's enemies shall be destroyed, the chief among them being "death."

For this reason, an ancient Easter chant goes thus,

"Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and on those in the tomb bestowing life."

If St Paul's reasoning for the resurrection does not work for you, let's consider science. Quantum mechanics indicates that the universe is moving toward greater disorder, greater chaos. Biological evolution, however, brings order into chaos. How do you reconcile the two? No need. Because there is death.

Death is the breaking down of parts that form life. We are all headed that way.

Resurrection, on the other hand, is the putting back together of the parts that form life. The fact that evolution exists in creation means that the tendency toward disorder can be overcome.

So, scientifically, resurrection is at least a theoretical possibility.

My brothers and sisters, our faith is a product of Scripture, Tradition and Reason. Our faith comes from a belief in the divine possibility of the unseen, the invisible.

I recall during my pilgrimage to Rome and Assisi several years ago, my travel companion was the Bishop Christopher Chessun of Southwark in London. I commented on the various relics of the saints we saw and doubted their authenticity. He said, "Alistair, you should at least appreciate the possibility that they could be real!" From that teachable moment, I learned that in faith, it is often what the object represents that truly matters. The resurrection presents to us a very attractive option for life; an option that many have died for; an option that have given hope and nourishment to countless saints who have gone before us.

Dear friends, let us hold fast to our resurrection faith. Let us hold fast to the faith that empowers us to do ministry here at this historic sanctuary as we feed the hungry and needy, nurture and educate the young, encourage and build up each other in hope and in love.

Let our life as a parish be a testimony to the Resurrection faith we have received. And if you're still considering your commitment to the Church, come and celebrate your quest for truth in the divine reality of the Good News we celebrate today:

Alleluia. Christ is risen.
The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia.