

Easter week 2 meditation, by Sam Sigg

Hi, this is Sam, husband of Michele, and father of Johan, Annie and Catherine. Michele and I came to St. John's in 2000, when we moved to New Haven. After my graduation from YDS in May of 2003, I left the fellowship of St. John's and became agnostic. I came back to practicing, engaged faith a few years ago, and rejoined the community of St. John's, where my family and I have been very blessed. I teach art in the Public school system in New Haven.

After reading the Scripture passages for April 19, I am comforted to know that Jesus knew me, and that Jesus knew us, and spoke about us – the church - before He went to heaven. Jesus spoke about us because He referred, in John 20v.29, to “those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.” If you think about it, Jesus was talking about probably 99.99% of the church, because of course most of the church has never seen Jesus, and yet have come to believe. That's quite remarkable. As John says a few verses later, we have come to believe on account of the things the disciples did write about and relate to us, and as he says, “...so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.”

Because we have come to believe, which may also be rendered in other traditions as “continue to believe” - and I like both phrases, because they allow for a gradual, continual, thoughtful persuasion - we can have abundant life now and in the resurrection reality that is to come, in our body. I want to focus for a few moments on this physical aspect of the resurrection.

I grew up in an evangelical, fundamentalist household – my parents were faith missionaries in the Belgian Congo in the late 1950s and early 60s – and I think I absorbed some erroneous thinking about heaven and the resurrection and living in eternity with God. Somehow the future in heaven was very ethereal, maybe super-spiritual, in the clouds with Jesus... and not very related to our life here. Many of us may have absorbed ideas about heaven and eternal life that are perhaps not as grounded in the material world as they should be.

But Jesus is very clear about the physicality of His resurrection: His body, after all, is the same body He had before, and it now bears scars that He will have forever, and that he enjoins the doubting Thomas to touch, as a living proof that is really is the very same body that was pierced and bled for us on the cross. In a related

passage in the Gospel of Luke, Ch. 24v40, Jesus tells His disciples to look at and touch His hands and His feet. He asks them if they have anything to eat, and they give Him a piece of broiled fish, which He eats. As a friend of mine says, "It didn't fall down to the ground." Jesus pointedly tells them that He is not a ghost, and that ghosts do not have flesh and bones, as He has. Apparently, we will have flesh and bones – forever? The resurrection body of Jesus is very much physical and alive, as our bodies are now – but transformed in ways we cannot now grasp.

Jesus also, in His resurrection body, walks with two disciples to Emmaus from Jerusalem, about a two-hour walk. In his gospel, John also relates that Jesus made a fire on the beach and made a breakfast of fish and bread for the disciples who had been working all night. They shared a meal, and as this same friend of mine points out, Jesus exercised hospitality, and this was a resurrection activity. It gives us a lot to think about, with respect to eternal life, a life that is spiritually abundant forever and also somehow physically meaningful. I am thankful for this mystery and for the thought that those of us who have come to know God, and to be known by God, will somehow enjoy an eternity of physical and spiritual interaction with each other and with a world and a dimension that will be transformed.

Dear Father in heaven, I thank you for what you have revealed to us about your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Thank you for showing us a glimpse of the resurrected, physical reality of what is our blessed hope, the hope of a meaningful, bodily eternal life of interaction with the world to come and with one another in Your presence, forever. Guard our hearts and minds as we think on these things. In Jesus' name, Amen.