

- *He approaches them.* In so many stories, the Risen Jesus surprises his friends and followers by unexpectedly appearing to them after his death and burial. A significant feature of many of these stories centers on how—in *his resurrection*— he is both the same and yet different. He enters rooms where the doors are closed and locked, but he can also eat food and be touched. **Resurrection is bodily**, even if it involves a *transformed* body. Here, modern physics comes to our help. Whether we are talking about our bodies or the chairs we sit on, the matter composing things in this world is *not* made up only of clumps of hard stuff. Matter is composed of waves and particles. Matter is dynamic, not static. Even if unusual, or presently unknown, the transformation of a body—*perhaps through a remarkable burst of energy*— from a physical state to a spiritual state, is not impossible, nor is it irrational.
- The stories of Jesus' resurrection appearances, and subsequent reflection on them in the New Testament, lead Christians to be very clear that we *not only* believe in resurrection, **we believe in bodily resurrection. Our present life and our future life are both bodily, even if in different ways.** It may be hard to imagine what it will be like to live in a spiritual rather than a physical body. But it's a lot easier to imagine living in a *spiritual* body than in *no* body at all. Our present lives are so inextricably tied to our embodiment that it's very difficult to imagine being human apart from having a physical body. This is the compelling reason why we continue to respect and treat carefully the bodies of those who have died. Not yet beholding their *spiritual* embodiment, we *revere* the physical bodies of the deceased just as we are called to do with the rest of the world around us. The Prayer Book reminds us of this, we ask God to "give us all a reverence for the earth as your own creation, that we may use its resources rightly in the service of others, and to your honor and glory."<sup>1</sup> Our physical bodies are appropriate objects for this kind of reverence.
- **Because our embodied humanity involves the intertwined concepts of person and body, our notion of personal intimacy is interwoven with bodily intimacy.** Intimacy provides a great challenge for western culture. We are barraged daily with displays of *physical* intimacy. Yet, we are

culturally naive about *personal* intimacy, and the narrowness of our view can be expressed simply.

- Many forms of our social interaction rest upon two assumptions: first, that personal intimacy is *always* physical, and sexual; *and second*, that sexual intimacy is *merely* physical. These widely held assumptions have latent power within them, and create a number spiritual and theological challenges for us. These two assumptions cause us to have *a hard time imagining personal intimacy with another person that is not sexual. We have an equally hard time accepting that sexual intimacy is always personal*, with *relational* implications for the whole person. These assumptions hinder *our ability to imagine personal intimacy that is not physical*. Which then makes it extraordinarily difficult for us to follow Jesus on *The Way*, into intimacy with God.
- Think of John, the beloved disciple, at the Last Supper. *Jesus loved him for who he was and not merely for his physical embodiment*. Reclining against Jesus at the Last Supper table meant something very different in his culture than it would today. It expressed genuine friendship and love for Jesus, and prefigured the personal and intimate relationship we all have with Jesus, through Baptism. Our culture does not prepare us to perceive this reality. And when we don't experience its beauty, we *don't believe it is real*.
- *Intimacy with God always has some affinity with, but also clear differences from, our intimacy with other persons in this fallen world*. Sometimes, our words, our facial expressions and bodily gestures are not sincere, and we fall short of encouraging each other's wholeness. We find ourselves *merely creating an impression* of personal relationship and intimacy. But our intimacy with God *never involves using* one another. God cherishes us for who we are in his embrace, and not merely for who we are in our own eyes.
- *With God, we are always the end and goal of divine self-giving love*. Jesus revealed and embodied God's personal love and intimacy. His loving intimacy is nurturing and healing, and enables a wholeness that can only be called the beauty of holiness.

## EASTER 5, May 18, 2014, Year A

- At the heart of Jesus' conversation with the disciples in our Gospel today is this profound insight. They knew they had fellowship and personal intimacy with Jesus. Precisely because this was real and true in their experience, they were then more prepared to discern what they could *not yet see*. *Personal intimacy with Jesus is personal intimacy with the Father, with whom he is one.* This was not a secret. Jesus, himself, had already spoken openly about this to fellow Israelites in the Temple Portico of Solomon. When asked to tell them plainly, if he was the Messiah, he fulfilled their request. *He said, "The Father and I are one."*
- To have personal intimacy with Jesus is to have personal intimacy with our Father, in the power of his Holy Spirit. Jesus' words to his disciples, and the reality of his enduring personal intimacy with them after his resurrection, *helped them begin to see inside a mystery.* They began to see inside *the mystery of our Trinitarian relationship with God.* Put most simply, we pray *to the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit.* This is the structure of every Eucharistic Prayer in the Book of Common Prayer, and also of most of our collects. Because we share personal intimacy with the Father through our membership together in the Son, *our prayers to God, are always prayers through God and in God. We pray to God from the inside,* as it were, rather than from the outside. This is what Jesus is getting at with his disciples, when he speaks of himself as *The Way*, the truth and the life. He is truly the living way into intimacy with God.



Sadao Watanabe, The Last Supper, 1995

<sup>1</sup> BCP:388, in Prayers of the People, Form IV.