

March 16

Mysteries... Or not... Body, Soul, Water, Bread, Wine – Cross!

Why do you think God chose to create us as *physical* beings, along with *spiritual*?

He could have made us spirits only, perhaps as a way to eliminate sin. But we know that in the case of angels who lack a body, their “spiritual” state did not save them from sin. Lacking a body did not necessarily make them any more resistant to sin, or even “more” spiritual. The initial rebellious thought in the tempter’s mind was obviously not a distorted view of a forbidden fruit, but I suspect it was similar to Satan’s own spin: **“You will be like God”** (Genesis 3:5). Sadly, that’s a refrain that keeps on playing in most alcoves, avenues, and hearts today. We still hear the chorus of conceit, the song of the sirens reeling us in – *“There’s something better, bigger, tastier!!! Don’t listen to that ridiculous worn-out reprise!”*

From dust and a rib, God crafted Adam and Eve. And then, when He breathed into them their soul with His Spirit, they truly became **“living beings.”** Body and soul intertwined, initially perfectly holy, fed by literal food in the sustaining presence of God walking by their side in the Garden.

In a way, the sacraments reflect our original state - something material and something spiritual, intertwined. Baptism reflects the original movement of God the Holy Spirit across the surface of the waters (Genesis 1:2) as God once again *stirs up the water* with His Word, bathes, washes, **“regenerates and renews.”** “Living water” not only sustains and is necessary for physical life but also provides the means of God’s grace for our soul. Simple bread and wine sustain the body. But when Christ Himself, in Holy Communion, adds His sacramental body and blood, bread and wine become the food of forgiveness for our soul.

But for the faithless or resistant soul receives no nourishment if Holy Communion is perceived to feed only the body. (1 Cor. 11) Even worse, the sacrament in those cases becomes a detriment.

We have to trust God’s Word, often without tangible proof. To help us trust, God gives us the added material of touch, taste, smell, physical washing, and nourishment. He gave us the sacraments in physical form, to reflect our physical body. Just as He did in the Garden, He adds to the physical His Spiritual life-giving and sustaining blessing and presence. Just as bodies are washed with water in the baptismal font, souls are washed (Hebrews 10:22 Titus 3:5 Ephesians 5:26). Just as bread and wine are consumed, Christ is consumed. This is so real that Lutherans call it “the real presence.” Why do we doubt? Do we doubt the bread’s presence? Do we doubt our own dual nature? Do we doubt Christ’s divine and human nature?

I often say that “The cross is the original ‘sacrament.’” I use the word “sacrament” here as a direct synonym for “mystery.” How did my sins get taken away and “nailed to the cross” (Colossians 2:14)? Just how did Jesus “take away my sins”?! How is He the “Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29)? Just how did God create with His Word? These things exceed our intellectual grasp. At some point we need to hear the words of Jesus, **“Only believe.”**

Prayer: *Lord, thank You that our bodies are fearfully and wonderfully made. Thank You that we are wonderfully remade in our souls. Thank you for the sacraments – which sustain both body and soul! Help us not doubt what is real both by touch and taste. Help us not doubt Your real promises and presence. May we only believe! Amen.*