

## RESURRECTION MEMORY

This is the third installment on the holiness of memory. As always, if you have any questions or would like to further discuss any *Vicar's Voice* themes, my door is always open.

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*Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life.  
Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live,"— John 11.25*

“This I do in quiet ways, that on your lonely path, you may not walk alone.” – Howard Thurman

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Most of us believe that there is *everlasting* life after an earthly death (John 3.16). But what happens to us when we die? What do we believe lives on in the afterlife? While the Greek understanding of the immortality of the soul was taught throughout Christian history, Martin Luther did away with the immortal soul and kept the Hebrew understanding of the resurrection of the body. Dr. David Keck, professor at Ateneo de Manila University in the Philippines, believes that since there is no separation between our body and soul, remembering is the connection with the past which is open through memory. He lifts up the importance of remembering that the soul is “the [central place] of God’s own loving, sustaining, healing, and resurrecting.”

Resurrection memory raises, or resurrects, the body and soul by connecting the past and present. The women at Easter, who went to anoint Jesus after the crucifixion, remembered the life and death of Jesus and this was significant in his resurrection on Sunday. “Resurrectionism,” is quite different from resurrection memory as “resurrectionism” often leaps from Maundy Thursday to Easter Sunday without believers walking through or remembering the cruel suffering of Friday and the vigil on Saturday. By not taking the time to remember Friday and Saturday, we forget the hard truth and tragedy of Jesus’ death on the cross.

In a similar way, closing our eyes to the suffering or being in denial about a family member with Alzheimer’s or dementia follows this same pattern by jumping from what she/he was like before the dementia set in — to the hope after death. This movement focuses on what the forgetful-ones use to be able to do and immediately transition into seeing the person as already dead. Wanting to deny the loss of memory and abilities of elderly family members can lead close-family relatives to abandon them and proceed through life as though the person with Alzheimer’s was deceased. It becomes the responsibility and moral imperative of caregivers, be they family or not, to resurrect (raise up) the person with Alzheimer’s and their forgotten memories. Dr. Keck offers that it is not the liberation, the struggle against the power of death, or the kingdom of God that are the central points of Alzheimer’s resurrection, but rather that it is about restoring the whole human body that is most important. He says, “The inescapable realities of Alzheimer’s disease is that the bodiliness of all human persons as a gift from God cannot be conceived apart from the renewed bodies given to us in the resurrection.”

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*Pour out your grace, God of love, upon all suffering with Alzheimer’s and dementia. It is frustrating not to find a word; it is fearful to lose one’s memories. Raise them up by the power of divine and communal memory as we hold them in our hearts. In Christ’s name we pray. Amen.*