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THE LUTHERAN WITNESS

UNCOVERING MYTHS ...

CHRISTIANITY | COUNTERFEITS | DEATH | JESUS | WOMEN | BIBLE



Providing Missouri Synod laypeople with stories and information that complement congregational life, foster personal growth in faith and help interpret the contemporary world from a Lutheran Christian perspective.

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Cover image: Martini Lutheran Church, Baltimore, Md., altar piece. LCMS Communications/Erik M. Lunsford

[to the reader]

A lot of charges are leveled against Christianity. And just as many questions are asked of it.

After we're dead, do our bodies even matter? Are we allowed to judge others? What about the old heresies that continue to rear their ugly heads still today? Is the Lord's Supper dependent upon how much faith we have? Do we really have to sing hard hymns?

Is it enough to have a personal relationship with Jesus or should we go to church too? Does Baptism really work? Should women be in the pulpit or the church kitchen? What about the verse in the Bible about Christians being hypocrites?

Who do we believe? And how do we know where to start? The answers are simple: Jesus and His Word.

It's never been easy to be the Church, but in this issue of *The Lutheran Witness*, you'll learn how easy it can be to debunk common myths leveled against Christianity and against Lutheranism in particular. Let's learn together how to make a good confession while keeping in mind, as cover story author the Rev. Derek Roberts reminds us, "The Word of God is the number one aid in the fight against heresy. His true Word shines light on all falsehood."

Thanks be to God!

Adriane Heins
MANAGING EDITOR, *The Lutheran Witness*

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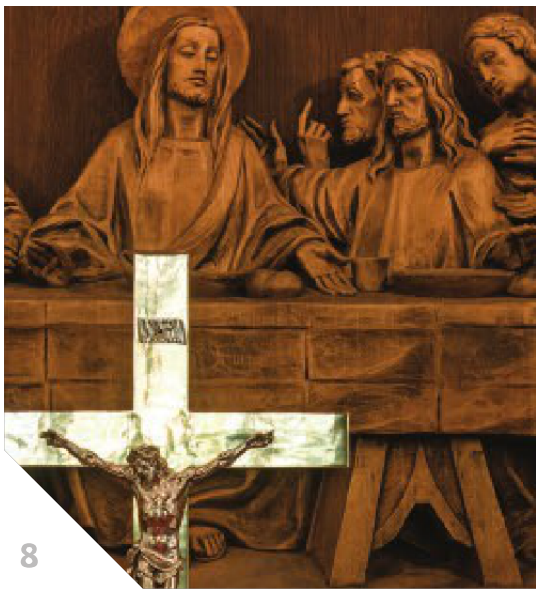
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We escort the body to the cemetery, literally its resting place - though not its final resting place - and commend the body and soul to God's keeping.

DEATH

by Robert Kieselowsky

**AFTER WE'RE DEAD, DO OUR BODIES EVEN REALLY MATTER?
JESUS SAYS, "YES!"**

The Rev. Robert Kieselowsky (revrobert@phillyministries.org) serves as director for Philadelphia Lutheran Ministries.



When the 46-year-old son of a national leader dies, the whole country mourns. Along with many others, I watched the funeral service for Beau Biden, listening for someone to speak comforting words to the family.

Sadly, I heard some common beliefs about what happens after death. People talked about Biden's personal qualities and how he would "go on" and "be with us" as a disembodied presence. People often talk as if our final breath throws off bodies that have trapped us and we get to float around giving joy to others. Or, just as vaguely, we become angels and "pass over to the other side."

In truth, most people believe life absolutely ends at death. Science offers proof of nothing after death except decomposition. We simply cease to be. Vague talk about "going on" is done in so-called kindness to others in mourning.

Obsession with this life as the end-all warps our ability to imagine a resurrection. When people picture humans coming back from the dead, those visions are decidedly hideous. One Philadelphia group organizes a zombie parade on Easter because they perceive a risen Jesus as half-dead, slightly decayed and very dangerous.

The Scriptures teach us to be specific when confronted with death. The Father created us soul and body. Both are precious to our Lord. Christ died to redeem both and bring both to everlasting life. Scripture gives glimpses of what happens between



PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES/ZOOMAR

BODY AND SOUL: BOTH MATTER!

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Most people believe death releases them from their bodies and absolutely ends life. Resurrection is often wrongly viewed as a zombie apocalypse.
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Lutherans speak comfort at death with specific teachings from Scripture. The Father created us soul and body. Both are precious to Christ who died to redeem them both.
.....

The grave is the body's resting place but not its final resting place. God keeps the person, body and soul, until the resurrection of all flesh.

our final breath and the resurrection, and we place our trust in what Christ has promised. Saints will rise from the grave, recognizable and free from disease and death. True words of comfort to those hurting at the death of a loved one — “Christ give you peace and rest from your sorrow” — acknowledge grief but point it toward Christ.

I Cor. 15:12–14 pinpoints our essential belief: “Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.”

The funeral service in *Lutheran Service Book* helpfully walks people through the full Christian confession. The person's body, dear to Christ,

comes to the church one last time. Together, we confess the creed in the face of death, shaking our fists at the audacity of the devil. We pray and hear the Word of God, of forgiveness and everlasting life. Finally, we escort the body to the cemetery, literally its resting place — though not its *final* resting place — and commend the body and soul to God's keeping.

The prayer spoken at the commendation of the dying and at the gravesite says it best: “May God the Father who created this body; may God the Son who by His Blood redeemed this body; may God the Holy Spirit who by Holy Baptism sanctified this body to be His temple keep these remains to the day of the resurrection of all flesh.” Amen and amen! **LW**