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## Ghosts and Religion?

**An article from the *Cathedral Times*.**

I preached about Halloween in my sermon last Sunday! It is titled, "Ghosts and Bodies: Spiritual and Religious." You can read the entire sermon [online](#) or find copies of it in the Cathedral kiosks. Meanwhile, however, here are two excerpts:

*Back in the old days, in church, we used to say, "I believe in the Holy Ghost," instead of "I believe in the Holy Spirit." But the word for both "ghost" and "Spirit" is really the same word. The word is "pneuma." Yes, it means "spirit," and it also means "wind." It means "breath." It can be all those things.*

*These days, we give the words "ghost" and "spirit" two contrasting meanings. The word "ghost" seems eerie and scary. The word "spirit" seems wonderful and life-giving.*

*When the disciples saw the risen Christ, they saw a spirit – a spirit which had some sense of reality, but which did not have a sense of body. And that was scary, like a ghost. It is only when Jesus asks for something to eat, confirming the sense of body, that things begin to calm down.*

*That! That asking for something to eat changed everything. Something changes at that point, when they eat together.*

*... A spirit without flesh is scary. Jesus was scary until he asked for something to eat. Jesus was scary until he had a meal in his community. In short, a spirit without flesh is scary. It is rambunctious and fleeting. It rambles and wanders. It can't grow. Sometimes in its loneliness, it even does damage.*

*Hey! As a matter of fact, that's what being "spiritual" and "not religious" is. "I am spiritual, but not religious," some have said. What that sentence really expresses, however, is the desire to have pure spirit without having a body.*

*Jesus was against that lonely spirit, that lonely ghost, wandering around without body. I believe Jesus was opposed to the notion of spirit without body. Remember: the word for "religion" comes from "Re-ligio," which means to tie back together. The word "ligament" comes from the same root. Remember that story on Easter morning about Ezekiel in the valley of dry bones? He saw ligaments and bones and tendons being brought together. He saw religion happening, bodies being tied together. He saw spirit taking on flesh. He saw ghosts taking on bodies.*

*The purpose of "spirit," the purpose of "spirituality" is to tie bones and muscles and ligaments together. To grow! "RE-ligio!" Religion! The purpose of spirituality is to be religious.*

*The phrase "I am spiritual, but not religious," then, is the phrase of someone not yet formed, not put together yet, maybe not yet mature. Maybe like someone dressed up as a ghost on Halloween.*

*Jesus, however, will not be known as a free spirit, a lonely ghost. The gospels, all four of them, are quite clear that Jesus is known in the breaking of bread. Jesus is known in the act of eating. Jesus is known as bodies take on form and shape and energy and purpose.*



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