

SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER
Year C April 7, 2013

Theme: I don't see, but I believe

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“Seeing is believing.”

“I won't believe what you are telling me unless I see some results.”

“Only believe what your own eyes are telling you is true.”

“Verify. Test using scientifically approved measurements and procedures. If it cannot pass the test, it is not.”

We who believe in the resurrection of Jesus often hear from modern scientifically oriented people what the believing apostles of the Gospel heard from Thomas:

I will not believe until I see for myself, in fact until I can touch and verify for myself.

Those apostles were fortunate to have the risen Jesus still in their midst so he could appear a week later and invite Thomas to put his hand in his side and fingers in the nail marks.

We who can no longer see the risen Jesus in the flesh are challenged to believe even though we cannot see.

Jesus called us blest if we could believe without seeing.

Many in our modern, scientific world call us foolish, crazy, childish idiotic for such belief.

Today I would like to take a stab at offering reasons for why I am a believer in the resurrection of Jesus even though I have not seen him risen from the dead.

My reasons are three and perhaps you will find something helpful in them for yourself.

They are these: tradition, a hunch and a hope.

First, the tradition begins with a small group of men and women who said they had seen and touched and talked to Jesus after his death.

And these same people then went on to spread word of him and then most of them to die as martyrs for him.

Why would they spend their lives for him and then die for him if it wasn't true?

This was the tradition that was passed on generation upon generation to me.

Now we human beings do all sorts of things because of traditions that make sense to us:

I wear pants because it's a tradition for men, but also because it makes sense to wear such clothes on my lower half with a zipper in the front rather than in the back or on the side.

I also use a fork when I eat because it is tradition but also because it is neater than my fingers and easier than chop sticks.

And I believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ because it is the tradition passed on to me by my parents and teachers but also because it makes sense to me.

It makes sense to me that if God sent his Son to die for all humanity that God would raise him from death as a signal, a sign that death will not be the last word.

Resurrection is God's way of completing Jesus' act of self-giving and generosity begun in the crucifixion with an act of joyous affirmation and exaltation in the resurrection.

Second, I believe in the resurrection as kind of hunch about the nature of what God has in mind for the world and for us.

Surely, a life as noble and as godly as that of Jesus of Nazareth was not going to end as rotting flesh and dried bones in a middle eastern tomb somewhere?

Surely, one who could heal the sick, tell parables like the Prodigal Son and the Good Samaritan, and who could forgive his executioners from the cross, surely such a one should not just, poof, die and be gone forever.

I have a hunch, a deep down in my soul that our God had something more in mind for such a one and resurrection from the dead fits the bill.

Similarly, when I look at this amazing cosmos in which we live, a cosmos into whose depths we have as yet barely looked let alone explored, surely God has more in store for it than a reverse big bang explosion.

This world with its glorious natural beauty, its diversity of life, its abundance of resources – all declared at the beginning to be very good – surely it is not destined to end in a dust ball of global warming or nuclear holocaust.

And surely these human bodies and minds and lives which are capable of such goodness and nobility can be transformed in a new burst of creative divine genius into something beyond the power of death to destroy.

I just have a hunch God has resurrection in mind for us and for our world, a new birth with all transformed into the fullness of Christ: no I can't see it, but I believe it.

And finally, I have a hope.

I have a hope, as our parish patron St. Paul phrased it, that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is a kind of first fruits.

That is, what happened to Jesus when he rose from the tomb is a pre-figurement, a kind of signal for what is to come for all who believe in him.

Granted Christ is Lord, and granted Christ is pre-imminent, but in some parallel way we will be raised up in a manner like his: free from death, eternal, beyond the constraints of sin and the corruption of materiality.

Of course I cannot see any of this, of course I cannot even imagine how this would work, but I believe the God who created this material world and established its laws can break through with a qualitatively new way of organizing the cosmos to first raise up Jesus and one day to raise us up with him.

This this the tradition in which I stand.

This is the hunch on which I am betting my life

This is the hope that gives me the strength to press on day by day.

Brothers and sisters how blest are we who cannot see yet believe.