

HOMILY FOR EASTER MORNING 2022

The Gospel of Easter morning does not present us with a resurrection – only an empty tomb. The resurrected Christ will begin to be seen in our readings in the coming days. However, it does make us understand something of what it is to believe. It's said, "Seeing is believing" however, "Not seeing" can also be believing.

Do you ever think about why we believe that Jesus is the Son of God? Do you ever wonder how Jesus could die and then be raised to new life? Do you ever wonder if any of this is true? I must admit, I have sometimes but, something always happens; something, even as unspectacular as an empty tomb, and my heart rediscovers afresh the desire for faith and to believe in all that we say about Jesus Christ.

Mary of Magdala had that moment of questioning and hopelessness. "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb and we don't know where they have put him," she told Peter and John.

They came to investigate and we're told that they found the place, not depicting the scene of grave robbers but, something orderly. The cloth wrapped around him would surely be taken with the body if someone was in a rush but, it was on the ground, suggesting it had simply fallen off Jesus as he arose. Surely, grave robbers wouldn't take the time to roll up the head cloth and put it somewhere else.

It was all John needed to believe. It certainly became a sign of Christ's resurrection which would be confirmed within hours of this moment.

This demonstrates faith – there are signs. We have to decide how we will interpret them. For instance, the Old Testament has 342 prophecies describing what the Messiah will be like; how he will be born; how he will die and what he will do. Mathematicians have stated that the odds of one man in the whole of history, fulfilling just eight of the prophecies is 1 in 100 trillion, trillion, trillion. That's like a one, with 17 zeroes after it. The odds of one man in the whole of history, fulfilling twice this many – sixteen prophecies – is 1 with forty-six zeroes after it. You can imagine the how these zeroes stack up when we get to 342 prophecies about the Messiah.

And, Jesus, this one man, fulfils them all. There can be no doubt that he is a unique person in the entire history of the world. Exceptional. Why would things not happen as have been described? Why would we not believe his resurrection?

This had certainly been on the mind of Peter when he spoke to the Roman Centurion, Cornelius and his household. Peter spoke of Jesus' life. How he died on the cross and three days later, was raised to life and was seen by many witnesses. How they ate and drank with him and how all the prophets bear witness to him.

Peter is saying, here is this unique person. How can you not believe in him? Cornelius and his household did come to believe.

Not only a unique person but, Jesus came in a unique time in history. We don't have these things happening today in the same way but, we don't have Jesus with us in the same way.

The witnesses such as Peter and Paul and most of the apostles were so convinced by what they had seen that they were willing to die, rather than lie that Jesus was not alive.

We probably don't realise how much we live by faith. We trust things to work. We trust we will wake in the morning. We plan for the future, believing that we will have one. Even love is an act of faith. You can do nice things for the one you love but, without trust – faith – that relationship could not have any truth. You can't prove love.

What is true for us? What do we believe? What would we be if we did not believe in the resurrection of Christ and our part in it?

This is why we renew our faith at Easter. This is why we receive the Eucharist because, despite our doubts and our confusion, we have been brought back to life with Christ.