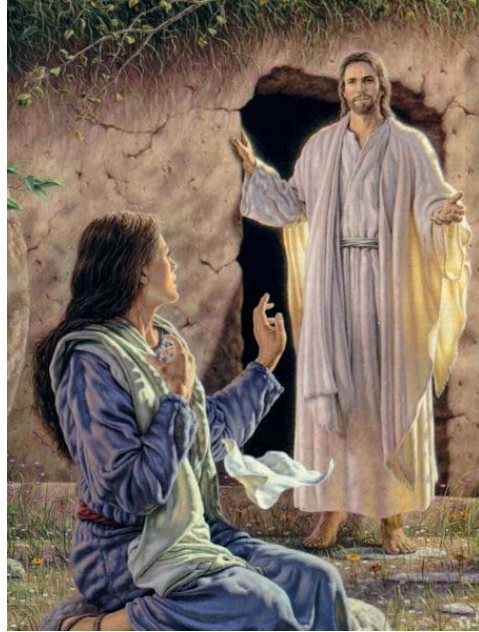


Easter Sunday, 2007



[Acts 10:34b: 37-43](#)

[Colossians 3:1-4](#)

[John 20:1-9](#)

I sometimes like to watch the CSI/Law and Order-spin offs – primarily because at one time I secretly wanted to be an investigator and a lawyer. What I find interesting in these episodes is how detectives piece together evidence, and how the prosecutor’s case is built around this evidence. The more bizarre the evidence is and the weirder the witnesses are, that makes for good television!

In the best episodes – and keep in mind this is television, not real life - the case is solved because detectives are willing to “look outside the box” for evidence. The prosecution makes its case

based not only on the corroborating evidence, but on the compelling testimony of the witness. In real life, however, I suspect that evidence is collected rather conventionally and witnesses are called forth based on how the witness's testimony backs up the evidence. I do not think that judges are particularly interested in a compelling testimony without evidence. In the words of Joe Friday from the classic police drama, *Dragnet*, "Just the facts m'ame, just the facts."

Today's Easter readings address both "evidence" and "testimony" of Jesus' resurrection, but unlike *CSI-Miami*, we are starting with testimony, not evidence.



Testimony in the case of the resurrection is not just about an objective, "I saw this;" but rather, what I *believe* I saw.

Mary of Magdala's testimony is based on her personal take on Jesus' absence. No doubt that Mary is still raw from the emotional impact of seeing her rabbi publicly humiliated by being stripped bare, tortured and left on a tree to die. Mary's experience of these most horrific scenes certainly conditioned her testimony: she was looking for the body of Jesus, and like any of us who might witness torture and a public execution, Mary of Magdala was conditioned to look for defeat. She went in the tomb looking for a beaten body, but saw nothing. That is why Mary of Magdala ran to Peter to tell him, **"They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we don't know where they put him."**

Simon Peter ran back to the tomb on Mary of Magdala's word. He entered and, like Mary, was not focused on resurrection, but looking for evidence of Jesus' *death*. He looked for the burial cloth and found that it had been rolled up and placed away from where the body was supposed to be. Peter, like Mary of Magdala, was dumbfounded. The disciple whom Jesus loved; however, figured out what was going on. He was the first to reach the tomb, but was not compelled to search for evidence of death: **"he saw and believed."**



In Colossians, Paul writes: “**Think of what is above, not of what is on earth.**” To give witness to the resurrection is not, therefore, based on what you *see*, but rather, on what you *believe*. Belief – FAITH – must be your point of reference when speaking about the resurrection. Take the disciple who was the most intimate with Christ. His friendship with Christ was his point of reference. This beloved disciple was guided by love he knew he had in his heart for Christ, not the fear generated by the threat of arrest, torture and execution. Testifying to the resurrection requires *trust*, not proof” *belief*, not evidence. Is my testimony enough to bring a non-believer to accept the resurrection? Probably not if you were looking for evidence of a raised body. What if you were looking for something else, something, “outside the box,” or in this case, “outside the tomb?”

Resurrection is about Jesus raised from the dead; however, testimony – how one comes to believe in the resurrection – is about the faith in the power of good to triumph over evil: that hatred, torture, public humiliation, and execution are dwarfed in comparison to the power of love. To give testimony to the resurrection is say that my daily life will not governed by a multi-colored fear code.

I believe and testify that one day we will live in a world freed from war and national domination. I believe and testify that our world will be built up by common interest, not special interest. I believe and testify that communities of peace and solidarity are possible and communities of exclusion will be things of the past. I believe that one day families will leave their homelands for education and tourism rather than be forced out of their homelands by economic and political desperation. And lastly, I believe and testify that the day will come when the life force of every being from the point of conception to one's natural end will be respected and be given full dignity.

Testimonies of the resurrection are in fact, the testimonies of peace, justice, compassion, fellowship, and forgiveness. Let our gathering this Easter Sunday be a peek into the tomb of

resurrection. We needn't look for signs that would confirm loss or failure, shame or doubt. But rather, let our hearts encounter the Risen Lord here, in our midst.

Reflection Question:

In what ways do you witness to the Resurrection in your life?



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