

Over the past few decades there have been numerous books, films and documentaries that attempt to explain away the mysteries of our faith. It seems that everything is debatable and we need concrete logical facts for things to hold as truth in our empirical world. Some liberal bishops even enjoy debating whether or not the resurrection was a physical, bodily one or something else. Whatever they attempt to prove or disprove, one thing remains unchanged in the 2000 years of Christianity, the kerygma or proclamation of the Church that Christ is risen. That is what we celebrate again today – that Christ is risen.

But we all know that some things in life are just beyond logical explanation or us being able to measure them. We have all experienced or heard about amazing co-incidences, had a sixth sense that someone was about to phone us or had very real and intense feelings which are beyond even words. Love is a classic example. Try telling a newly engaged couple that their love isn't real because you can't physically see it or measure it! Reality isn't just what we physically see, Reality is about experience.

On the first Easter, the women and the disciples had an experience of the Risen Christ. For Mary, it was a physical, tangible one – she took hold of Jesus' feet and worshipped him. Others saw him appear in their midst. Thomas placed his hands in Jesus' wounds, some walked and talked with him on the road, others even ate broiled fish and bread with him. The disciples on the road to Emmaus definitely had an experience – they felt their hearts burning within as he spoke – yet they didn't even recognize him until he had left. Other people have a more dramatic, conversion experience – like Paul...for others, perhaps like most of us, it is a more constant relationship of presence with its ups and downs. But the experience of the Risen Christ was something that the first Christians could never have imagined. They had seen Jesus suffer and die, they held his cold, lifeless body and lay it in the tomb...but now they encounter a totally different, unexpected experience. Christ is Risen!

The fact that Jesus is risen makes Christianity vastly different from the smorgasbord of faiths and spiritual practices that abound. Christianity isn't just about personal enlightenment – it's about living within a community. Christianity isn't just about living by a moral code and doing good works – it's about *embodying* the divine. Christianity is about experiencing the Risen Christ – in the present. The power of which transforms and empowers us. Christ is risen and is among us. We continue to experience his presence in the present. We do not simply recall with nostalgia the biblical stories of Jesus crucified and the empty tomb – we actually experience it. It was the Risen Christ who empowered the disciples to become fearless ambassadors of the Gospel. This group of deserters who fled in fear and grief to the Upper Room are dramatically transformed. They experience Jesus.

Throughout history people have been transformed through experiencing the risen Christ. The resurrection is so real. A saint is simply someone whose life has been transformed through an encounter with the Risen Christ. We know of many famous saints who gave up all, suffered or were even martyred for the sake of the Gospel. Tonight we celebrate the initiation of yet another young saint – Hayley as she enters into new life through the waters of baptism. Hayley has responded to her experience of the Risen Christ....The Christ who calls us all.

There is a lot of *energy* in tonight's Gospel – Matthew's account of the first Easter. When I studied physics at school I remember learning about vectors – they were something that moved but with a specific direction. This passage really has that sort of feel about it – there is so much *movement and energy*.

- The 2 Marys *went* to see the tomb.

There is a *great earth quake*.

An angel whose appearance was *like lightning descends* and *rolls back the stone*

The guards *shook and collapsed*

And the angel says "*come and see* where he lay and *go quickly* and *tell his disciples* "He has been raised from the dead, and indeed *he is going ahead of you* to Galilee; there you will see him"

Then we are told they left *the tomb quickly and they ran*

Suddenly Jesus met them, Mary *took hold* of his feet and *worshipped* him.

Jesus then said "*Go tell my brothers to go* to Galilee...there they will see me"

So today as Hayley is baptized and we renew our own baptismal promises, we remember that we are called to "Go".... –the Easter proclamation that Christ is risen gives us energy and direction. We are called to *Go* and live the gospel. To *go* to Galilee and see him. To experience him Risen in the world and to also be channels through which others can experience the Risen Christ.

The Resurrection is not something to be debated or proven. The Resurrection is real because it continues to be experienced by REAL people who are radically transformed. OUR experience is valid, OUR experience is tangible and real.

The best things in life are pure experience. Some things are just beyond words...

Christ is Risen !! Alleluia Alleluia!