

THE EMPTY TOMB - HE HAS RISEN INDEED

The resurrection of Jesus from the dead is the be-all and end-all of the Christian faith. If Jesus didn't rise from the dead, then we all might as well go home. As Paul himself put it: "If Jesus is not raised from the dead, our preaching is in vain." The Christian Church should have died with the death of Jesus.

-After intense examination of pagan and the Scripture accounts - many have come to believe in Jesus' bodily resurrection / Such as:

-The Gospel accounts are similar but not exactly the same – Any good Investigator will tell you that when witnesses' stories are exactly the same, that this is not normal, and would raise red flags (eg., bank robbers with an exact script).

***Sometimes with Scripture – we need a *Necessary Explanation* where none can be found – IN the case of the Empty Tomb we have no valid explanation as to why it was found empty.**

**-St. John Chrysostom – wrote in a 4th century Easter homily:
“The apostles heard and drew near to the tomb with eagerness. They see the linen clothes lying there. That would be strange - If thieves had removed the body, they would not have stripped it first – Why take the trouble to remove the napkin and roll it up and place it apart from the linens.**

-St. John tells us Jesus was buried with much myrrh – Myrrh literally glues the linen to the body. He tells us this so that when you hear that the napkin lay apart from the linens, you might question those who say the body was stolen. Why would thieves waste time to remove the sticky linens and napkin from the body. They would take the body and leave in haste.

-The soldiers, the Jewish Elders, The Roman Leaders were all aware of the stories of a resurrection, so they needed to guard the tomb with their lives to squash this pesky new religion – Yet the tomb was still found empty.

-The Apostles weren't going to gain fame, riches, and notoriety like the 80's TV Evangelists - So why perpetuate a myth/lie – Why steal the body when there is literally nothing to gain by doing this? – Oh yes – They could be beheaded like Paul – Crucified upside-down like Peter – Fed to the beasts in the coliseum as Perpetua and Felicity.

-History reports that the first followers of Jesus were scared and timid at the cross – most ran away – but later were willing to give their lives to participate in this ancient church - “What changed them?”

-Our Easter Readings will speak of the EYEWITNESSES.

-The early Christians who saw the empty tomb, and then the thousands who saw the risen Christ. They proclaimed the Holy Name of Jesus – Acts of the Apostles said they added to the numbers of the early Catholic Church - Thousands were Baptized and Confirmed.

So awed were they by the resurrection—that you can sense it in every book and letter of the New Testament - These timid Apostles are transformed to men of great strength and courage – enough that most imitated Christ by the giving of their lives.

This Easter is a Reminder; Jesus desires to nourish you throughout the year in the Sacramental life of the Church – In Sanctifying Grace – Moving us each day towards a wholeness of life, Spirit, and Being - Jesus wants you to know Him...To touch you – Heal you – Give you purpose & hope – To give you LIFE! And to give you His Church.

It comes down finally to this: if Jesus was not raised from the dead, Christianity is a fraud and a joke. But if he did rise from death, then Christianity is the fullness of God's revelation, and Jesus must be the absolute center of our lives.

As we leave Lent and enter the Easter Octave remember: “The original purpose of Lent was the preparation of the catechumens for Baptism on Saturday, at the Easter Vigil. A common name for Baptism was “illumination” because that sacrament undoes the damage of original sin by providing us with the corrective lenses to

see more clearly, to see according to the mind and heart of God.

Hence, many of the prayers and readings of the Sacred Liturgy would have us reflect on the very profound meaning of enlightenment. May we now move forward with immense Hope because:

He has risen Indeed!

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