

Easter Sunday.

Year C

Alleluia !

*This Mass is our Alleluia;
our song of praise to the risen Christ who is our life
and whose triumph over death
we proclaim to all the world.*

(Readings: Acts of the Apostles 10: 34, 37-43. Colossians 3: 1-4. John 23: 1-9.)

For more than two thousand years now, the Church has celebrated, and proclaimed, the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. And for our part, as Christians, we say we believe that Jesus, did indeed, rise from the dead. But how can we, or for that matter, how can the Church, prove such an extraordinary thing?

A perfectly reasonable person might somewhat sceptically protest, ‘You may well say, “he is risen”, but where is your evidence?’ A fair question, some would say.

Let us, just for argument’s sake, suppose that you were asked to prove your love for, say, your husband or your wife, for your children, or for your parents, or a friend, or anyone else. How would you do it? How could you prove your love?

It is easy for a mother, or for a father, to say that they love their children. It is easy enough to say the words. But the only way they can prove it is by what they actually do for their children. A loving mother sits up with her child at night when he or she is sick. A loving father spends time joining in his child’s interests and activities, helping with homework, taking him to see his favourite football team, or her favourite pop group. Parents are sensitive to their child’s moods and feelings, and are always available, ready to listen and advise when needed. They set their son or daughter a good example of behaviour.

All these things would be living examples, or proof, if you like, of the love a parent has for his or her child. When you say to your son or daughter, or to any of the people you care about, “I love you,” it is not merely an empty phrase, since it is by what you do, and in how you care for them, that your loved ones feel the effects of your love in their lives.

So it is, with the resurrection. – When we say, “Christ is risen”, we can point to the effect his resurrection had on his apostles and his close friends. Prior to his death, they were weak and fearful. Having seen him arrested and condemned to death, many of them fled, anxious to save their own lives. Peter, his right-hand man, actually denied even knowing him, not once, but three times.

When Jesus died, it seemed like the end of all their hopes. But when he arose from the dead on the third day, what a transformation took place in those trembling apostles. They were transformed from weaklings into most powerful witnesses, witnesses who were, now, more than prepared to give up their own lives for their belief in the risen Christ.

As far as I am concerned, that is the greatest, most sure proof that Christ did indeed, rise from the dead; this dramatic and profound change which he brought about in his apostles.

Down the centuries, since Christ's Resurrection, there have been countless millions more of his disciples, two millennia of followers who have, likewise, testified to this self-same belief. Saints and Martyrs, Lay and Religious, untold numbers have dedicated their lives to Christ.

St Paul said that 'if Christ be not risen, our faith is in vain.'

Surely these heroic people couldn't all have been wrong? Surely they could not have made so many sacrifices? Surely they could not have borne such great suffering, if they had not been absolutely convinced that Christ had truly been raised from the dead, and that one day, they – we – would all share eternal life with him.

Well, now it's our turn to prove to the world that Jesus is alive; to prove that he is alive in us. All our actions, all our deepest devotion to him, our abiding faithfulness, our heartfelt care for his less fortunate brothers and sisters; all these things, are undeniable proof that he conquered death, and that he lives on, and lives on in us.

Today we say, "Christ is risen. Alleluia, alleluia!"

Will other people look at our lives and see the same joy, the same love, the same enthusiasm, the same hope, which were so clearly evident, so manifest in the apostles? For if they do.... then they will have to, likewise proclaim,

"He is risen indeed. Alleluia, alleluia!"