

# Resurrection

## *The Best Empirical Data*

Easter Sunday – Year B

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*Acts of the Apostles 10:34a, 37-43*

*Psalms 118:1-2, 16-17, 22-23*

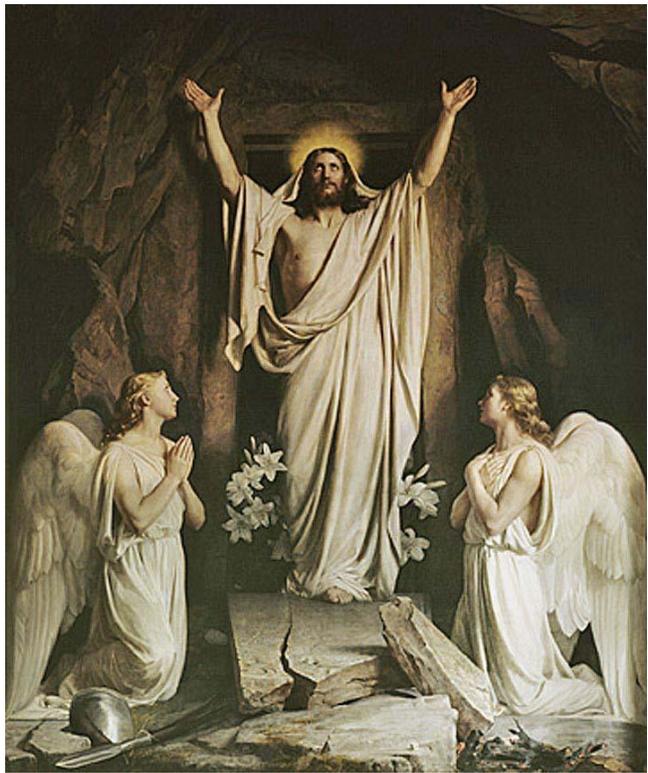
*Colossians 3:1-4*

*John 20:1-9*  
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Why do we believe the Earth is Round? How do we know that man has walked on the Moon? These may appear to be rather fundamental, even ludicrous questions to which we can easily provide an answer: We have seen pictures (that could have been doctored); we have videos (even copies of *Star Wars*, *Star Trek* and *2001: A Space Odyssey*); we have been told (by people who could have lied, especially to obtain funding). All three answers have been given to demonstrate the existence and experience of such things as UFOs, Bigfoot and Global Warming. So why do we believe?

In a modern era that gives much credence to science, and scientific processes in which conclusions are based on observable data, there is no better data than eyewitness accounts, first hand observations and verifiable calculations. Galileo is among the early Fathers of Modern Science whose personal observations and scientific calculations have helped to influence the way we see and understand our universe.

When all is said and done, there are still people who believe the Earth is flat, that the Moon landing was staged and that pictures of the universe from the Hubble Telescope are no more than computer generated artistic masterpieces. In the end, we choose to believe (or not), because we put our faith (or not) in those who have taught us; who have testified from



experience or education, that these things are true; who have taken the pictures, made the scientific calculations, who have made the journey to tell us they have "been there," and "done that."

The great irony of the celebration of Easter is the lack of data. Artistic renditions notwithstanding, not one of the four Gospels offers a first-hand account of Christ rising from the dead. All we have been given is the empty tomb. Even Bill O'Reilly, in his recent historical novel, *Killing Jesus*,

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ominously concludes, "To this day, the body of Jesus of Nazareth has never been found."

So why do we believe in the Resurrection? How do we know that Jesus Christ rose from the tomb, triumphant over death? In an age of scientific verification, how can we be sure of something so central to our faith?

We can be sure because we have the best empirical data. Like those who testify to the roundness of the Earth and the walking on the Moon, we put our faith in those select few who have given eyewitness testimony that Jesus is Risen. The Apostles and other select Fathers of our Christian Faith testified to a first-hand experience of the Risen Jesus. Others, like St. Paul, testified to a first-hand experience of Jesus in and through His Church (Acts 22:6-8). Even in the face of persecution that included imprisonment, unspeakable torture and violent execution these eyewitnesses to the Risen Jesus went to their graves holding fast

to that experience. (This is different from Galileo, who under pressure chose to recant).

As we celebrate the central event of our faith, let us resolve to evangelize that faith in the Risen Christ, verified by eyewitnesses, handed down by the Church, and - as Pope Francis has said is so essential - is personally experienced in and through His presence with the Church.

When, in an interview, Cardinal Timothy Dolan of New York was asked who is the most influential person in his life, he answered, without hesitation, "Jesus Christ, of course." A bit perplexed, the interviewing reporter clarified, "I meant someone who is alive." To which the Cardinal answered, with all the surety of not merely belief, but first-hand experience, "You know? Jesus IS alive!"

Fr. Bill Nicholas  
April 18, 2014

