

**Easter Sunday 2019**  
**Easter Vigil – John: 20.1-9**  
**Acts:10.34,37-43///Col:3.1-4///John: 20.1-9**

→at some time in the course of this holiday, many of us will sit down at table to enjoy our Easter dinner...a story is told about young Ernie and his family one Easter Sunday...

→it seems that Ernie and his family were invited to have Easter dinner at his grandmother's house

→after everyone was seated around the table and as the food was being served...Ernie started eating right away...

→his mother stopped him immediately and said, "Ernie, you have wait until we say grace."

→the five year old replied... "we don't have to say grace"

→ "of course we do" .his mother insisted, "we always say a prayer before eating at **our** house."

→ "that's at our house, Ernie explained, "but this is Grandma's house, it's safe—she knows how to cook!"

→whatever your plans might be...enjoy your holiday.

PAUSE

→years ago after an Easter Sunday mass a person who was not a regular churchgoer came up to me afterwards and asked if he could ask me a question.

→it seemed to be important to him because he waited around until everyone else had left...

→he then said... “I want to ask you something....I heard you talk all evening [morning] about a man who died and came back to life...doesn’t that bother you at all? How could you actually believe such a thing?”

→needless to say, our conversation took on a whole new meaning and ended up lasting longer than I expected....and after talking for quite a while, doing my best to respond to his concerns...I must confess that I achieved no breakthrough.

→later on...as I was driving to dinner...my lack of success with the gentleman, prompted me to wonder.

→I speak so often and so confidently about the resurrection...I profess it every Sunday in Creed and I weave it into my homilies each week.

→I speak of the resurrection as I seek to console the sick and the dying...I speak of it as I try to win back to the faith those who have strayed...

--and yet....if **my** belief in the resurrection simply rolls off the tip of my tongue and doesn’t impact me intellectually....if it doesn’t amaze me spiritually...have I unwittingly reduced it in my own mind to a “pious legend?”

→i.o.w....it the resurrection just a nice ending to sad story...is it just an all-purpose bromide...a soothing remark....a fairy tale ending designed to cover over any real discussion of human suffering, pain and death?

→these are the questions we must all deal with as believers of faith...and as we hear today even the first believers wrestled with the very same questions.

→Mary Magdalene, arriving in the pre-dawn darkness finds the stone rolled back...and her first thought is that someone had stolen the body of Jesus.

→in Matthew's gospel , we are told that the guards were paid off to say that someone came during the night and stole the body of Jesus...

→but today's reading from John seeks to dispel that rumor by describing explicitly how the burial clothes were folded up and neatly arranged...hardly the work of grave robbers!

→furthermore, today's reading also describes the reaction of John, the beloved disciple, upon peering into the tomb...it says that John "saw and believed"

→as John looked inside the tomb...he began to believe...at least that Jesus's body had not been stolen

→and grave robbery, of course, isn't the only explanation for the disciples belief in Jesus' resurrection.

→another theory states that after being traumatized by the brutal death of their friend, his followers devised and accepted **as true** this delusional story: their lord and master was alive after all...he had risen from the dead...and they believed this, not only to console themselves to actually launch a new religious movement.

→likewise, Paul , in his 1<sup>st</sup> letter to the Corinthians, makes clear that Christian belief rises or falls on the truth of the resurrection....that it is not a made-up fantasy, a happy ending or a way of coping...but rather it is at the heart of our belief and faith.

→so what are we...in 2019...to make of all this?

→ultimately we have two choices...either we will judge Christ according to our own standards, according to our own experience, our own way of tackling difficult questions...

--in which case we might conclude that Jesus was merely...a brilliant human being...an inspiring teacher who was killed because of politics...

→and that the resurrection was a matter of self-deception on the part of his followers, thus emptying our Christian faith and our lives of hope and joy...

OR

→we might come to the realization that it's not just the resurrection but the whole of Christ's existence that demands faith on our part: his identity as God's son; his incarnation; his preaching and miracles; his death on the cross; his rising from the dead; his exaltation in heaven.

PAUSE

→and today on Easter Sunday...we are challenged to make our choice

→moments from now we will renew our baptismal promises....to reject Satan, to turn from sin...and to once again embrace our faith...the cornerstone of which is the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

--the words we will say are familiar to us, yet how easy it is to miss the forest for the trees.

→the creed...our belief...our faith is not a "to-do" list...but rather the true significance of our profession of faith is our surrendering to believing in the resurrection

...and because of that surrender...knowing that all is now different.

EASTER IS...realizing that we are not alone anymore...that God is with us and continues to be with us...

--and today marks the day and time to show the world around us that our lives have been changed...

--that Christ has truly risen from the dead...and is alive...

→and **that** is not just a happy ending to a sad story ....it is what we truly believe.