

## **April 28, 2019 (Divine Mercy Sunday)**

Acts 5:12-16; Rev 1:9-11a, 12-13, 17-19; Jn 20:19-31

Do you believe in aliens? A lot of people do. Many others at least believe that it is really likely, and only a matter of time before we find proof of such life. The Church has no problem with there being life on other planets - God certainly *could* have created life on other planets - but the Church has no real position either way. When people say that they are sure there is life anywhere other than on Earth these are faith positions and not science fact, because there has never been any verified scientific evidence ever found of any alien life ... ever. However despite the lack of evidence many people simply take it on faith that alien life will be surely found - since scientists believe it is probable.

Why then when we Christians speak of the resurrection of Jesus would such a person who believes unproven possible things on faith say “you can’t believe that, there’s no scientific proof”? There is actually *more* proof for the resurrection as there are of aliens . There are eyewitness accounts watching Jesus die, seeing him buried, and then seeing him alive afterwards. We have never observed verified alien life forms. But, on the other hand, couldn't someone say that there are individuals who report seeing UFO's and having been abducted by aliens - and this make them eyewitnesses - isn't that the same as the people saying they saw Jesus? Not really - and I'll explain why.

There seems to be something else going on with Jesus' resurrection that is different than these accounts of having seen aliens. We heard in the first reading that signs and wonders were being done through the hands of the Apostles. Something is going on here that is causing a big stir, very different than accounts of alien abduction. We hear in some places that thousands a day were being added to the number that believed in Jesus - incredible! On top of this, it's not just the eye witness accounts in the Bible that we have to look at, sources outside the Bible also record eyewitness accounts of Jesus' life, death *and* resurrection. Dr. Thomas Arnold, a noted Oxford historian has stated: “I know of no one fact in the history of mankind which is proved by better and fuller evidence of every sort...” than the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

These guys in the Gospel are telling a weird story - an unbelievable story (yeah, our boss died and came back to life, and you have to believe in him to be saved ... but you'll just have to take our word for it). Why would people buy into this? What else was going on? It's amazing

that these uneducated fishermen (who were likely illiterate) and others of no real social standing would be able to sit in the temple and preach this stuff and not get thrown out. It's strange that they would sit in Solomon's portico in the temple and people esteem them; that people had such confidence in their message - perhaps because it was becoming so widely known through eyewitness accounts that it was true. The fact that this message has persisted for 2000 years, and spread through the world while multiple other such movements lasted only a generation - something is going on here. Remember that next time someone says that you must believe in aliens because there is a high likelihood and logical reasoning pointing to it, yet you must distrust the resurrection despite a high likelihood and logical reasoning pointing to it.

We all can be like Thomas in today's Gospel who said: *Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger into the nailmarks and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.* We have been told that you can't believe something without scientific proof (unless it's aliens or something else on the list of things that academics want to find). But the fact is that we **can** honestly believe in something that we have not seen. Because Thomas doubted that didn't mean Jesus wasn't alive, and our doubt doesn't disprove the resurrection. As Jesus said in the Gospel: *Have you come to believe because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and believed.* Blessed are those who believe what was handed down by those who saw the risen Jesus and listened to him explain the passages of scripture relating to him. Blessed are those separated from here events by thousands of years who continue to believe by the faith given through the Holy Spirit.

I believe there are planets around stars I have never seen - and I believe that Jesus Christ is raised from the dead and is now present among us. Can we hear in our own hearts the voice of Jesus that we heard in Scripture today: *Once I was dead, but now I am alive for ever and ever. I hold the keys to death and the netherworld.* The guy who holds the keys to death and the netherworld wants to connect with you. As Jesus presents himself to us today under the forms of bread and wine, can we open our hearts to believe even more? Can we believe without seeing and let that presence and power of God enter our lives? Jesus was merciful to Thomas helping him out of his doubts, and Jesus will have mercy for those who risk to trust in Him despite their doubts. We might just find that the miraculous events that happened at the hands of the Apostles have not stopped, that often so-called coincidences are the result of the power of God, that belief in the power of Jesus holds the key for the future of our world and our own lives.