

EASTER HOMILY

Christ is risen! He is truly risen! This is the great acclamation of faith which is popular among the Christians of the Eastern Orthodox world. It is a joyous declaration of faith on the part of the Church both East and West.

When Jesus was attracting those first disciples, they had it easy in a way. Jesus, at that point, was a real live flesh and blood human being. You could see him with your very own eyes, hear him with your ears, even reach out and touch him as did the woman in the gospel who reached out to touch his cloak in the hope she might be cured of her illness. Having faith in Jesus was much easier we can presume at that particular stage of Jesus' life. Even Jesus' death on the cross brought people to faith as that Roman centurion, who was stationed at the scene of the crucifixion, was able to declare: "truly, this man was the Son of God."

But that first Easter Sunday changed everything. How does one come to faith in Christ when he is no longer walking and talking among us? In what is our Christian faith, especially our faith in the resurrection of Christ and our own resurrection, grounded?

Problems arose right from the beginning. The gospel recounts how Jesus' disciples were accused of propagating a hoax since they must have stolen the body. And there have been books published in the last thirty years by individuals who are still on the hunt for Jesus' mortal remains.

But let's go back to our question--in what is our faith in the resurrection of Christ grounded? Is it grounded in an empty tomb? For that matter, in what was the faith in Jesus grounded among those who saw him and heard him preach and walked in his company? Was it nothing more than their own personal contact that brought them to faith in Christ?

The non-believer will not be satisfied with any answer that is not grounded in concrete fact. For the believer, as they say, no answer is necessary. Yet, the Church does have an answer and the answer

is the Holy Spirit.

The New Testament teaches that faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. So Christian faith is rooted in the virtue of hope. It is grounded in a deep sense of trust. And in times like we're living in right now with this horrible pandemic and the debilitating effect it is having on our social lives, we can be tempted against hope, against trusting in Him.

So what is the source of our trust? In what does our hope and ultimately our faith in the Risen Christ depend? The Church will only say it is the life of the Holy Spirit breathing within us.

You and I do not find ourselves members of the Body of Christ because we simply chose to join. For most of us, there was no choice anyway because we were brought up in the faith by our parents. And even those who came to faith as adults, do you think it was all about your conscious choice? Is it all your doing? No. We are members of the Church, the Body of Christ, because the Spirit of the living God is at work in our lives, drawing us to deeper trust in the life and teaching of Jesus Christ, giving us the courage and the deep longing of our hearts and souls to know the joy of the Risen Christ in our daily lives and to be living proof that Christ is risen! He is truly risen! Amen! Alleluia!