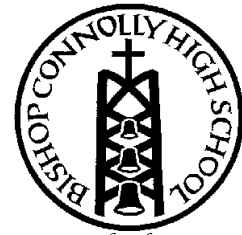


From the Chaplain's Office...

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*Not Only Hearers
but Doers of the Word*

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Chaplain's Conference #3

The Case for the Resurrection & the Consequences for the Christian Faith

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I. Introduction

- 1) The Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is ground zero for the Christian faith. It is the central mystery of faith that Christ died for our sins and rose from the dead on the third day, just as he promised he would. When the Scribes and the Pharisees asked Jesus for a sign to show that his words were true, that he was sent from God, Jesus responded: "No sign will be given to this generation except the sign of the prophet Jonah." In our faith in the Resurrection, we celebrate that sign and all that it means! Jesus, after having spent three days dead in the earth, after having been tortured and killed on a Cross for all of Jerusalem to see, rose from the dead!
- 2) We Christians today perhaps accept this fact TOO readily, I think, and as a result often underappreciate the true meaning this event would have had for the first disciples, not to mention us and everyone who has ever lived. Pause for a second just to consider what we believe about Jesus. Among other things:

- a) We believe, among other things, that he was conceived by the power of God in the virginal womb of a young teenage girl.
 - b) We believe that he walked on water.
 - c) We believe that he fed 5000 families with five fish and two loaves of bread.
 - d) We believe that he cured countless sick people, expunged legions of demons, and raised Lazarus from the dead four days after Lazarus had died.
 - e) Then we believe that he himself after having been scourged, beaten and hammered to a tree in front of countless eyewitnesses, having breathed his last and lowered his head, having been pierced with a sword to prove that he was dead, having been taken down from the Cross in the arms of his mother, anointed with oils, and then laid in a tomb that was sealed with a huge stone, ROSE FROM THE DEAD 40 hours later.
- 3) We Christians often take these facts too readily for granted. Let me ask you: If a teenage girl came to you and said she was pregnant but she had never been with a man, would you believe her? If you saw a man walking on water during a storm, would you not think your eyes were deceiving you? Have you ever seen a man rise from the dead?
- 4) Each of these claims is completely outrageous from the point of view of typical human experience. This fact was not lost on the early Christians.
- a) The ancient pagans in the Roman empire used to constantly mock the first Christians for believing in superstitions like “a god dying” or a “man rising from the dead.” These pagans, to taunt the Christians, used to constantly remind them that their so-called Savior had been tortured and killed by the Romans and had died on a Cross. They did it so often that the Christians became so embarrassed of the crucifixion — Jesus, the God-man, being killed on a Cross — that they didn’t start putting a corpus on the Cross until the 400s, after Christianity had become the official religious of the empire.
 - b) The ancient Christians knew that when they put their faith in the Christ’s resurrection, they were believing in something that was ridiculous from a human point of view. They knew it made them seem like those today in the United States who maintain that Elvis is still alive — in other words, it made them seem CRAZY. But they believed that these facts which sounded too good to be true really were true, and everything in their lives changed as a result.
 - c) They recognized that Jesus was either who he said he was — the Son of God, the Messiah, who had come into the world to save us from our sins, who had worked all of these miracles and risen from the dead as he had prophesied — or he was the GREATEST LIAR OF ALL TIME, not to mention a blasphemer and a lunatic who would actually believe that he was the eternal Son of God. To believe that Jesus was merely a good man was not an option: how could a “good man,” a good moral teacher, actually claim to be God if he weren’t?
 - d) No rationalist has produced any plausible theory to explain how the belief in the deity of Christ originated. The contemporaries of Jesus were no readier to believe that some obscure carpenter was God than we should be. Had not Christ risen from the dead the belief in his deity would have died with him. There is no escaping the dilemma that Christ was either God or deluded madman intoxicated with a conceit overpowering in its absurdity. There is no trace in the words of our Lord of the humility which we associate with the saints. He never displays remorse, never suggests that he has fallen into sin, for the one text which is tolerant of some such suggestion is in reality an example of our Lord's gentle irony. Christ seldom stated his claims explicitly; it was his custom to elicit admissions of those claims by questions addressed to his disciples, and the questions which he poses in the words "Why dost thou call me good? None is good but God alone", admits of two answers. "You are neither God nor good", or "you are God and therefore you are good."
 - e) The Christians knew that if Jesus truly had truly risen from the dead, if the sign of Jonah were true, then that confirmed EVERYTHING Jesus had said, about life, about death, about the truth, about God. As Jesus said on a few occasions to the scribes and pharisees, “The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works.... If you do not [believe me because of my words], then believe me because of the works themselves.” The works of the Father — most especially his greatest, most miraculous work of all, raising Jesus from the dead — confirmed everything Jesus had said. And the first Christians knew that it meant that their lives should therefore

change to conform entirely with this way, truth and life, this Good News incarnate, who was Jesus, the Risen Lord, the Son of God.

- 5) The Resurrection of Christ, again, is ground-zero in our Catholic Faith. Everything we believe basically comes from this fact and is based on it. There are today many so-called Catholic and Protestant Biblical and theological “scholars” — many here in Germany, many in the United States — who say that if Jesus’ body were found in the tomb, it really wouldn’t change our faith very much.
- a) St. Paul answered them two-thousand years ago when he said to the Corinthians, who were raising a similar point: “If Christ has not been raised, your faith is in vain and you are still in your sins.”
 - b) If Christ is not risen from the dead, therefore, then everything we hold in the Catholic faith is a grand charade. Then our hope in eternal life is just a delusion. Then what we eat in the Eucharist is just strange-looking bread and cheap wine. Then all of our efforts to be good really have no ultimate foundation, and, as St. Paul says, the logical consequence is that we should all “eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die.”
 - c) To put it in more concrete terms, if Christ has not risen from the dead, then the last one of us to leave this chapel and throw off our cassocks and habits is the biggest fool of all.
- 6) We believe in the fact of the Resurrection with the certainty of faith, but nevertheless we believe it and strictly speaking we don’t know it on the basis of having seen it occur.
- a) Questions can arise, therefore, about the role of our reason in our belief in the Resurrection.
 - b) Is our belief merely a matter of a “gift of faith,” that we have and that other’s don’t, or is it something that is “reasonable,” something that is capable of being communicated to others?
 - c) Is there evidence we can use to make a case to persuade others that this event — which, we have to be honest, far exceeds the normal human capacity for credibility, that Jesus ROSE FROM THE DEAD after he was crucified— really happened?
 - d) Yes, there is evidence, and a good deal of it, and this conference hopes to provide some of it.

II. Resurrection Texts in Sacred Scripture

Matt. 28:1 After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. 2 And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. 3 His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. 4 For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. 5 But the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. 6 He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. 7 Then go quickly and tell his disciples, ‘He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.’ This is my message for you.” 8 So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. 9 Suddenly Jesus met them and said, “Greetings!” And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. 10 Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.” 11 While they were going, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests everything that had happened. 12 After the priests had assembled with the elders, they devised a plan to give a large sum of money to the soldiers, 13 telling them, “You must say, ‘His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep.’ 14 If this comes to the governor’s ears, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.” 15 So they took the money and did as they were directed. And this story is still told among the Jews to this day. 16 Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. 17 When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. 18 And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Mark 16:1 When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. 2 And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. 3 They had been saying to one another, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?” 4 When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. 5 As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. 6 But he said to them, “Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. 7 But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you.” 8 So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid. 9 [[Now after he rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons. 10 She went out and told those who had been with him, while they were mourning and weeping. 11 But when they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, they would not believe it. 12 After this he appeared in another form to two of them, as they were walking into the country. 13 And they went back and told the rest, but they did not believe them. 14 Later he

appeared to the eleven themselves as they were sitting at the table; and he upbraided them for their lack of faith and stubbornness, because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen. 15 And he said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation. 16 The one who believes and is baptized will be saved; but the one who does not believe will be condemned. 17 And these signs will accompany those who believe: by using my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; 18 they will pick up snakes in their hands, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover." 19 So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. 20 And they went out and proclaimed the good news everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by the signs that accompanied it.]] 21 [[And all that had been commanded them they told briefly to those around Peter. And afterward Jesus himself sent out through them, from east to west, the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation.]]

Luke 24:1 But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. 2 They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, 3 but when they went in, they did not find the body. 4 While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. 5 The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. 6 Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, 7 that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again." 8 Then they remembered his words, 9 and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. 10 Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. 11 But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. 12 But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened. 13 Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, 14 and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. 15 While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, 16 but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. 17 And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" They stood still, looking sad. 18 Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?" 19 He asked them, "What things?" They replied, "The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, 20 and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. 21 But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. 22 Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, 23 and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. 24 Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him." 25 Then he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! 26 Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" 27 Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures. 28 As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. 29 But they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over." So he went in to stay with them. 30 When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. 31 Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. 32 They said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?" 33 That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. 34 They were saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!" 35 Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread. 36 While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." 37 They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. 38 He said to them, "Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? 39 Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." 40 And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. 41 While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" 42 They gave him a piece of broiled fish, 43 and he took it and ate in their presence. 44 Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you — that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled." 45 Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, 46 and he said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, 47 and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. 48 You are witnesses of these things. 49 And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high." 50 Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and, lifting up his hands, he blessed them. 51 While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven. 52 And they worshiped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; 53 and they were continually in the temple blessing God.

John 20:1 Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. 2 So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." 3 Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. 4 The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. 5 He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. 6 Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, 7 and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. 8 Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; 9 for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. 10 Then the disciples returned to their homes. 11 But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; 12 and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. 13 They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." 14 When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. 15 Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she

said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." 16 Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!" (which means Teacher). 17 Jesus said to her, "Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" 18 Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"; and she told them that he had said these things to her. 19 When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." 20 After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. 21 Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." 22 When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. 23 If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." 24 But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. 25 So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe." 26 A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." 27 Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe." 28 Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" 29 Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe." 30 Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. 31 But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

John 21:1 After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias; and he showed himself in this way. 2 Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples. 3 Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will go with you." They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. 4 Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. 5 Jesus said to them, "Children, you have no fish, have you?" They answered him, "No." 6 He said to them, "Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish. 7 That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on some clothes, for he was naked, and jumped into the sea. 8 But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, only about a hundred yards off. 9 When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. 10 Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you have just caught." 11 So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred fifty-three of them; and though there were so many, the net was not torn. 12 Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, "Who are you?" because they knew it was the Lord. 13 Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. 14 This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead. 15 When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my lambs." 16 A second time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Tend my sheep." 17 He said to him the third time, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" And he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep. 18 Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go." 19 (He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, "Follow me." 20 Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them; he was the one who had reclined next to Jesus at the supper and had said, "Lord, who is it that is going to betray you?" 21 When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, "Lord, what about him?" 22 Jesus said to him, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? Follow me!" 23 So the rumor spread in the community that this disciple would not die. Yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you?" 24 This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and has written them, and we know that his testimony is true. 25 But there are also many other things that Jesus did; if every one of them were written down, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.

1Cor. 15:1 Now I would remind you, brothers and sisters, of the good news that I proclaimed to you, which you in turn received, in which also you stand, 2 through which also you are being saved, if you hold firmly to the message that I proclaimed to you — unless you have come to believe in vain. 3 For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, 4 and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, 5 and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. 6 Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. 7 Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. 8 Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.

III. Synthesis of the New Testament Accounts

- 1) The main sources which directly attest the fact of Christ's Resurrection are the Four Gospels and the Epistles of St. Paul which we have just listed.
- 2) Easter morning is so rich in incident, and so crowded with interested persons, that its complete history presents a rather complicated tableau. It is not surprising, therefore, that the partial accounts contained in each of the Four Gospels appear at first sight hard to harmonize.

- 3) But whatever exegetic view as to the visit to the sepulchre by the pious women and the appearance of the angels we may defend, we cannot deny the Evangelists' agreement as to the fact that the risen Christ appeared to one or more persons.
- a) According to St. Matthew, He appeared to the holy women, and again on a mountain in Galilee;
 - b) According to St. Mark, He was seen by Mary Magdalen, by the two disciples at Emmaus, and the Eleven before his Ascension into heaven;
 - c) According to St. Luke, He walked with the disciples to Emmaus, appeared to Peter and to the assembled disciples in Jerusalem;
 - d) According to St. John, Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalen, to the ten Apostles on Easter Sunday, to the Eleven a week later, and to the seven disciples at the Sea of Tiberias.
 - e) St. Paul (I Cor., xv, 3-8) enumerates another series of apparitions of Jesus after His Resurrection; he was seen by Cephas, by the Eleven, by more than 500 brethren, many of whom were still alive at the time of the Apostle's writing, by James, by all the Apostles, and lastly by Paul himself.
- 4) Here is an outline of a possible harmony of the Evangelists' account concerning the principal events of Easter Sunday:
- a) The holy women carrying the spices previously prepared start out for the sepulchre before dawn, and reach it after sunrise; they are anxious about the heavy stone, but know nothing of the official guard of the sepulchre (Matt., xxviii, 1-3; Mark, xvi, 1-3; Luke, xxiv, 1; John, xx, 1).
 - b) The angel frightened the guards by his brightness, put them to flight, rolled away the stone, and seated himself (not upon, *ep autou*), but above (*epano autou*) the stone (Matt. xxviii, 2-4).
 - c) Mary Magdalen, Mary the Mother of James, and Salome approach the sepulchre, and see the stone rolled back, whereupon Mary Magdalen immediately returns to inform the Apostles (Mark, xvi, 4; Luke, xxiv, 2; John xx, 1-2).
 - d) The other two holy women enter the sepulchre, find an angel seated in the vestibule, who shows them the empty sepulchre, announces the Resurrection, and commissions them to tell the disciples and Peter that they shall see Jesus in Galilee (Matt., xxviii, 5-7; Mark, xvi, 5-7).
 - e) A second group of holy women, consisting of Joanna and her companions, arrive at the sepulchre, where they have probably agreed to meet the first group, enter the empty interior, and are admonished by two angels that Jesus has risen according to His prediction (Luke, xxiv, 10).
 - f) Not long after, Peter and John, who were notified by Mary Magdalen, arrive at the sepulchre and find the linen cloth in such a position as to exclude the supposition that the body was stolen; for they lay simply flat on the ground, showing that the sacred body had vanished out of them without touching them. When John notices this he believes (John, xx, 3-10).
 - g) Mary Magdalen returns to the sepulchre, sees first two angels within, and then Jesus Himself (John, xx, 11-16; Mark, xvi, 9).
 - h) The two groups of pious women, who probably met on their return to the city, are favored with the sight of Christ arisen, who commissions them to tell His brethren that they will see him in Galilee (Matt., xxviii, 8-10; Mark, xvi, 8).
 - i) The holy women relate their experiences to the Apostles, but find no belief (Mark, xvi, 10-11; Luke, xxiv, 9-11).
 - j) Jesus appears to the disciples, at Emmaus, and they return to Jerusalem; the Apostles appear to waver between doubt and belief (Mark, xvi, 12-13; Luke, xxiv, 13-35).
 - k) Christ appears to Peter, and therefore Peter and John firmly believe in the Resurrection (Luke, xxiv, 34; John, xx, 8).
 - l) After the return of the disciples from Emmaus, Jesus appears to all the Apostles excepting Thomas (Mark, xvi, 14; Luke, xxiv, 36-43; John, xx, 19-25).
 - m) The harmony of the other apparitions of Christ after His Resurrection presents no special difficulties.
- 5) Briefly, therefore, the fact of Christ's Resurrection is attested by more than 500 eyewitnesses, whose experience, simplicity, and uprightness of life rendered them incapable of inventing such a fable, who lived at a time when any attempt to deceive could have been easily discovered, who had nothing in this life to gain, but everything to lose by their testimony, whose moral courage exhibited in their apostolic life can be explained only by their intimate conviction of the objective truth of their message.
- a) Again the fact of Christ's Resurrection is attested by the eloquent silence of the Synagogue which had done everything to prevent deception, which could have easily discovered deception, if there had been any, which opposed only sleeping

witnesses to the testimony of the Apostles, which did not punish the alleged carelessness of the official guard, and which could not answer the testimony of the Apostles except by threatening them "that they speak no more in this name to any man" (Acts, iv, 17).

- b) Finally the thousands and millions, both Jews and Gentiles, who believed the testimony of the Apostles in spite of all the disadvantages following from such a belief, in short the origin of the Church, requires for its explanation the reality of Christ's Resurrection, for the rise of the Church without the Resurrection would have been a greater miracle than the Resurrection itself.

IV. Opposing theories

- 1) By what means can the evidence for Christ's Resurrection be overthrown? Four general theories of explanation have been advanced through the ages, which we will tackle in turn:

2) The Theft Theory

- a) The disciples, it is said, stole the body of Jesus from the grave, and then proclaimed to men that their Lord had risen.
- b) This theory was anticipated by the Jewish authorities who "gave a great sum of money to the soldiers, saying: Say you, His disciples came by night, and stole him away when we were asleep" (Matt., xxviii, 12 sq.).
- 1) The Jewish authorities bribed the guards to lie and say that the disciples stole Jesus' body and, as the end of the passage states, "this story is still told among the Jews to this day" — in other words it was still circulating at the time of the writing of St. Matthew's Gospel, probably about 30-40 years after the Resurrection would have taken place.
 - 2) It's ironic that the Jewish authorities bribed the guards to lie, for they had arranged for them to be installed at the tomb by Pilate. The deeper significance of the phrase "within three days" and of Christ's cryptic allusions to destroying temple and rebuilding it in three days did not escape the chief priests; for while the witnesses blundered and contradicted each other in their attempt, not necessarily dishonest, to represent Jesus as a madman who had asserted that he could destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, the chief priest seems to have suspected that what Jesus really meant was "If you kill me, I shall rise again in three days". And it is therefore easy to understand why they should have gone to Pilate saying: "Sir, we have remembered, that that seducer said, while he was yet alive: After three days I will rise again. Command therefore the sepulcher to be guarded until the third day, lest perhaps his disciples come and steal him away, and say to the people: He is risen from the dead; and the last error shall be worse than the first. Pilate saith to them: You have a guard: go, guard it as you know."
 - 3) In succeeding centuries Roman pagans and intellectuals tried to attack the Christian belief in the Resurrection as irrational. How could a God die or a man rise from the dead, they asked?
 - 4) The same was urged by Celsus (Orig., "Contra Cels.", II, 56) with some difference of detail.
 - 5) There are still many people today who say they cannot accept the miracle of the Resurrection, including, sadly, many so-called Christian "intellectuals" in University settings, who think Jesus was a good man, but that the first disciples just exaggerated Jesus' physical resurrection when what they really meant to say (as we'll see below with the modernists') was that Jesus was risen from the dead only "in faith" within their hearts. They say that if the tomb were not empty on Easter Sunday morning, it really wouldn't change our faith at all. They will say, like the Jewish authorities of the first century we see in today's Gospel, that the empty tomb in itself is not proof that Jesus rose from the dead. It just proves that Jesus' body was not there on Easter Sunday morning; it doesn't answer the question WHY his body wasn't there.
- c) But to assume that the Apostles with a burden of this kind upon their consciences could have preached a kingdom of truth and righteousness as the one great effort of their lives, and that for the sake of that kingdom they could have suffered even unto death, is to assume one of those moral impossibilities which may pass for a moment in the heat of controversy, but must be dismissed without delay in the hour of good reflection. More below.

3) The Vision Theory

- a) This theory as generally understood by its advocates does not allow visions caused by a Divine intervention, but only such as are the product of human agencies. For if a Divine intervention be admitted, we may as well believe, as far as principles are concerned, that God raised Jesus from the dead.
- b) But, according to this theory, where are the human agencies which might cause these visions?
 - 1) The idea of a resurrection from the grave was familiar to the disciples from their Jewish faith;
 - 2) they had also vague intimations in the prophecies of the Old Testament;
 - 3) finally, Jesus Himself had always associated His Resurrection with the predictions of his death.
- c) On the other hand, according to this theory, the disciples' state of mind was one of great excitement; they treasured the memory of Christ with a fondness which made it almost impossible for them to believe that He was gone. In short, their whole mental condition was such as needed only the application of a spark to kindle the flame. The spark was applied by Mary Magdalen, and the flame at once spread with the rapidity and force of a conflagration. What she believed that she had seen, others immediately believed that they must see. Their expectations were fulfilled, and the conviction seized the members of the early Church that the Lord had really risen from the dead.
- d) Such is the vision theory commonly defended by recent critics of the Resurrection. But however ingeniously it may be devised, it is quite impossible from an historical point of view.
 - 1) It is incompatible with the state of mind of the Apostles; the theory presupposes faith and expectancy on the part of the Apostles, while in point of fact the disciples' faith and expectancy followed their vision of the risen Christ.
 - 2) It is inconsistent with the nature of Christ's manifestations; they ought to have been connected with heavenly glory, or they should have continued the former intimate relations of Jesus with His disciples, while actually and consistently they presented quite a new phase that could not have been expected.
 - 3) It does not agree with the conditions of the early Christian community; after the first excitement of Easter Sunday, the disciples as a body are noted for their cool deliberation rather than the exalted enthusiasm of a community of visionaries.
 - 4) It is incompatible with the length of time during which the apparitions lasted; visions such as the critics suppose have never been known to last long, while some of Christ's manifestations lasted a considerable period.
 - 5) It is not consistent with the fact that the manifestations were made to numbers at the same instant.
 - 6) It does not agree with the place where most of the manifestations were made: visionary appearances would have been expected in Galilee, while most apparitions of Jesus occurred in Judea.
 - 7) It is inconsistent with the fact that the visions came to a sudden end on the day of Ascension.

4) Modernist View — A resurrection only in "faith"

- a) The Church described and condemned in the thirty-sixth and thirty-seventh propositions of the Decree "Lamentabili", the views advocated by another class of opponents of the Resurrection.
- b) The 36th proposition reads: "The Resurrection of our Saviour is not properly a fact of the historical order, but a fact of the purely supernatural order neither proved nor provable, which Christian consciousness has little by little inferred from other facts." This statement agrees with, and is further explained by the words of Loisy ("Autour d'un petit livre", p. viii, 120-121, 169; "L'Evangile et l'Eglise", pp. 74-78; 120-121; 171).
- c) According to Loisy:

- 1) The entrance into life immortal of one risen from the dead is not subject to observation; it is a supernatural, hyper-historical fact, not capable of historical proof. The proofs alleged for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ are inadequate; the empty sepulchre is only an indirect argument, while the apparitions of the risen Christ are open to suspicion on a priori grounds, being sensible impressions of a supernatural reality; and they are doubtful evidence from a critical point of view, on account of the discrepancies in the various Scriptural narratives and the mixed character of the detail connected with the apparitions.
 - 2) If one prescind from the faith of the Apostles, the testimony of the New Testament does not furnish a certain argument for the fact of the Resurrection. This faith of the Apostles is concerned not so much with the Resurrection of Jesus Christ as with His immortal life; being based on the apparitions, which are unsatisfactory evidence from an historical point of view, its force is appreciated only by faith itself; being a development of the idea of an immortal Messiah, it is an evolution of Christian consciousness, though it is at the same time a corrective of the scandal of the Cross. The Holy Office rejects this view of the Resurrection when it condemns the thirty-seventh proposition in the Decree "Lamentabili": "The faith in the Resurrection of Christ pointed at the beginning no so much to the fact of the Resurrection, as to the immortal life of Christ with God."
- d) The contemporary relevance of Jesus' physical Resurrection was highlighted in the 1976 Easter edition of the French daily *Le Monde*, which put the following question to well known and less well known spokesmen for the country's Christian community: "What would happen to your faith if in some place in ancient Palestine an archeologist's pick should unearth the bones of Jesus of Nazareth?"
- 1) The replies of many ordinary faithful who were asked this question reflected their embarrassment and distress. As did that of Jean Guitton. "If a find of that kind should really come to light, I would set down in my will: 'I have deceived and have deceived myself'," replied the French academic and friend of Paul VI.
 - 2) In contrast, many priests and professional theologians shrugged off the <Le Monde> question. "It wouldn't distress me at all. My faith does not rely on a tomb either empty or filled," said one leading Catholic priest.
 - 3) Another replied that "the discovery of the skeleton of Jesus would strengthen my faith, which has to be entirely undemonstrable if it is to be such, and it would destroy the myth of the reanimation of a corpse".
 - 4) A respected Protestant theologian added: "It wouldn't prevent me from believing in the resurrection. Indeed such a find would unleash the faith, forcing it no longer to trust in the visible".
 - 5) The Protestant theologian Rudolf Bultmann said: "If the resurrection were an historical fact, faith would become superfluous. What is decisive is not that Jesus came to life again but that he is <for you> the Risen One. The one who was crucified is alive again if you see him as such with the eyes of faith".
- e) Besides the authoritative rejection of this foregoing "Modernist" view, we may submit the following three considerations which render it untenable:
- 1) The contention that the Resurrection of Christ cannot be proved historically is not in accord with science. Science does not know enough about the limitations and the properties of a body raised from the dead to immortal life to warrant the assertion that such a body cannot be perceived by the senses; again in the case of Christ, the empty sepulchre with all its concrete circumstances cannot be explained except by a miraculous Divine intervention as supernatural in its character as the Resurrection of Jesus.
 - 2) History does not allow us to regard the belief in the Resurrection as the result of a gradual evolution in Christian consciousness. The apparitions were not a mere projection of the disciples' Messianic hope and expectation; their Messianic hope and expectations had to be revived by the apparitions. Again, the Apostles did not begin with preaching the immortal life of Christ with God, but they preached Christ's Resurrection from the very beginning, they insisted on it as a fundamental fact and they described even some of the details connected with this fact: Acts,

ii, 24, 31; iii, 15,26; iv, 10; v, 30; x, 39-40; xiii, 30, 37; xvii, 31-2; Rom., i,4; iv, 25; vi, 4,9; viii, 11, 34; x, 7; xiv, 9; I Cor., xv, 4, 13 sqq.; etc.

3) The denial of the historical certainty of Christ's Resurrection involves several historical blunders:

- a) it questions the objective reality of the apparitions without any historical grounds for such a doubt;
- b) it denies the fact of the empty sepulcher in spite of solid historical evidence to the contrary;
- c) it questions even the fact of Christ's burial in Joseph's sepulchre, though this fact is based on the clear and simply unimpeachable testimony of history.

5) The Swoon Theory

- a) This is a now-seldom-held-but-historically-prevalent theory of those who assert that Christ did not really die upon the cross, that His supposed death was only a temporary swoon, and that His Resurrection was simply a return to consciousness.
- b) This was advocated by Paulus ("Exegetisches Handbuch", 1842, II, p. 929) and in a modified form by Hase ("Gesch. Jesu", n. 112), but it does not agree with the data furnished by the Gospels.
- c) The scourging and the crown of thorns, the carrying of the cross and the crucifixion, the three hours on the cross and the piercing of the Sufferer's side cannot have brought on a mere swoon.
- d) His real death is attested by the centurion and the soldiers, by the friends of Jesus and by his most bitter enemies. Moreover, if Jesus had merely returned from a swoon, the feelings of Easter morning would have been those of sympathy rather than those of joy and triumph, the Apostles would have been roused to the duties of a sick chamber rather than to apostolic work, the life of the powerful wonderworker would have ended in ignoble solitude and inglorious obscurity, and His vaunted sinlessness would have changed into His silent approval of a lie as the foundation stone of His Church.
- d) It is no wonder that later critics of the Resurrection, like Strauss, have heaped contempt on the old theory of a swoon.

V. The Case for the Resurrection

1) It's very important that we do respond to the claims against the Resurrection, because St. Paul says that if Jesus Christ did not rise from the dead, then our faith would be in vain. All that we do in the faith would simply be a waste of time.

1 Cor 15:13 If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised; 14 and if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation has been in vain and your faith has been in vain. 15 We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified of God that he raised Christ — whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. 16 For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised. 17 If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.

2) There are, fundamentally, two categories of evidence in favor of the Resurrection. They are, essentially, the same categories that would be used in a modern trial:

- a) The inherent coherence and credibility of the evidence or testimony itself; and
- b) the credibility of the witnesses giving the testimony.

We will take each in turn. This evidence will provide us not only means to respond to those might question us, but also help us to understand our faith better and, even more importantly, to live it.

3) When we look at the evidence, it is clear that the position of the Jewish authorities about the empty tomb is in itself self-contradictory.

- a) St. Thomas Aquinas used to say that human reason cannot PROVE or demonstrate the things of the faith, but it can demonstrate the falsity of claims against the faith or at least show that these claims do not prove what they think they prove. We see this in the matter of the empty tomb.
 - b) The argument of the Jewish authorities was on the basis of the bribed soldiers' claim that the disciples "came by night and stole Jesus while they were asleep." Well, as any good lawyer might ask:
 - 1) If they were asleep, how do they know that it was the DISCIPLES who took Jesus?
 - 2) How would the disciples not have awakened them in moving the huge stone from in front of the tomb?
 - 3) If the disciples had stolen Jesus' body, why would they have left the wrappings for his body and his head inside the empty tomb at all, not to mention very neatly? Why, in others words, would they have wanted to steal Jesus NAKED and carry him unclothed through the streets of Jerusalem?
 - 4) We can also ask the larger question about why they would have come at all to take the corpse of someone who had just been crucified as a criminal and who, if he didn't rise from the dead, was a liar who not only got himself killed, but, as we will in the Acts of the Apostles, would get his disciples in a lot of trouble as well.
 - 5) The evidence AGAINST the Christian explanation of the empty tomb is extraordinarily weak indeed.
- 4) When we turn to the evidence and testimony for the Resurrection, there are two main sources.
- a) The first is the empty tomb.
 - 1) Although not in itself PROOF that Jesus rose from the dead, it is evidence that the Christian explanation is plausible.
 - 2) Jesus' body was simply not found in the tomb and it was never found afterward there or anywhere else.
 - 3) Had the body of Jesus never left the tomb the Pharisees would have thrown the tomb open for inspection and invited the dupes of this new heresy to see for themselves the body of Jesus, still lying where he had been buried.
 - 4) There is at least one fact which suggests that some of the Pharisees were not particularly impressed by their own hypothesis. When St. Peter was summoned before the Council and refused to cease preaching Christ, many of the Council wished to put him to death, but Gamaliel "a doctor of the law, and respected by the people" warned them "if this work be of men it will come to naught. But if it be of God you cannot overthrow it. And they consented to him." They would probably not have consented had they been wholly convinced by their assertion that the disciples had stolen the body of Jesus and were therefore preaching something which they knew to be false.
 - b) But the main evidence is found the APPEARANCES of the Risen Lord.
 - 1) Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene; the disciples on the road to Emmaus; the ten in the upper room on Easter Sunday; the eleven the following week; Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, James and John and two other disciples fishing in the Sea of Galilee; 500 disciples most of whom, St. Paul tells the Corinthians, were still alive; James, and then ultimately Paul on the road to Damascus.
 - 2) All of these people testified to SEEING the Risen Lord.
 - a) In just chapter 20 of the Gospel of John on the apparitions of Jesus, who has come forth from the tomb, we can perceive—also from the use of words—that faith in the Risen One is born of seeing, of noting with the eyes the tangible signs of His Resurrection as an historical fact.

- b) The verb "to see" in its various connotations expressed by the different Greek forms, appears all of 13 times in just 25 verses.
- c) The experience of seeing progressively engages four subjects (first the beloved disciple who has gone to the tomb with Peter, then Mary Magdalene, then the whole group of apostles except for Thomas and then Thomas together with all the apostles).
- d) In the various passages, we perceive a progressive purification of outlook which begins with wonder at the physical sight of Jesus risen again (though at first the Magdalene thinks he is a gardener) and it reaches the point of contemplation, with that same wonder, of the mystery of the Lord who reveals himself. And, in fact, we go from the verb <Blepein>, meaning to see, take in, to look attentively and observe (verb <Aeorein>), and arrive at conscious recognition, clear vision, contemplation of the mystery manifest (the perfect <Eoraka>).
- e) After the Magdalene announces that she has found the stone of the tomb rolled away and the tomb empty, John runs to the site with Peter. When Peter and John arrive, it is enough for the beloved disciple, even before he sees the Risen One, to sight a few signs (the empty tomb, the bands in which Christ's body was wrapped are an empty shell and have not unravelled) in order to start "to believe" (20,8). But it was intuition, a stirring of the hope that John conserved in his heart, the calm, serene acceptance of a mystery still in part inexplicable. For, in fact, it has still not exploded in the announcement made to the other disciples: he and Peter go back home, because, the Gospel tells us, "they had still not understood the scripture, that he must rise from the dead" (20, 9).
- f) This initial lack of preparation on the disciples' part is fundamental. It shows that the resurrection was for them a totally unexpected event and not an <a priori,> something that could be taken for granted and that the disciples were bound to believe and divulge. And this renders their testimony credible, when the experiential signs become more evident and when the transition is made from John's timid initial intuition to indisputable certainty. As Father Donatien Mollat wrote: "This stage of total lack of preparation, a sort of blindness on the part of the witnesses when faced with the resurrection, is fundamental: this radical lack of preparation only highlights more the reality of divine intervention and its aspect as an act of creation. The Easter faith was a reawakening for Jesus' disciples".
- 3) There are only three possible conclusions on the basis of these appearances:
- a) Either all of them were deceived in one way or another by some false image (which would have been an extraordinary feat in its own right!);
- 1) Such an hallucination would seeing something else, and mistaking it for what you are looking for; these people saw what they were looking for and, one and all, mistook it for something else.
 - 2) St. Mary Magdalene did want to find the Crucified, and it would have been natural enough if she had seen the gardener and mistaken him for our Lord. The curious thing is that she saw our Lord and mistook him for the gardener.
 - 3) The two disciples on the Emmaus road, who were thinking about our Lord and talking about him as they went, might have been pardoned if they had recognized his figure, wrongly, in that of some casual passer-by. But the fact is that they thought he was a casual passer-by when they really met him.
 - 4) The apostles in the Upper Room might easily have seen a ghost and taken it for their Master; but they didn't, they saw their Master and took him for a ghost.
 - 5) And again by the lake-side, they might have been deceived by the accents of a strange voice, and thought it was his. It is more significant that they should have been deceived by the accents of his voice, and thought it was a strange one.

- 6) They didn't run away with their first impressions, and tell unauthenticated stories of a miracle. They examined their first impressions and only by examination learned the miraculous truth.
- 7) The example of St. Thomas is quite clear as well. No prejudice could be stronger than St. Thomas'. He insists on experimental proof before he believes, and yields only to the irresistible pressure of stubborn fact. It is impossible to fit this story into the familiar pattern of hallucination.
- b) or all of them were lying, or
- c) or they were telling the truth that they had indeed seen Jesus risen from the dead.
- c) To determine which of the three possibilities seems most likely, we do so on the basis of the resurrection witnesses' credibility.
- 1) When we look at the witnesses in the Gospels and in the letters, we cannot help being overwhelmed by the evidence in favor of their believability.
 - 2) The men who were testifying to Jesus' being risen from the dead were people who had abandoned the Lord in the Garden when he was alive but merely seized. Why would they speak boldly after his death? If Jesus hadn't risen, they would be testifying to a liar, someone who deceived them for three years, had gotten them to leave their families, their businesses, and their livelihoods in what would have turned out to have been a grand hoax. They would have more likely HATED Jesus rather than posthumously praised him.
 - 3) The apostles would have had nothing to gain financially from propagating such a falsehood. They traveled, by Jesus' instructions, with no staff, no bag, no bread, no money, and no extra tunic.
 - 4) They had no real persuasive abilities, all coming from obscure Galilean villages with little education — and, let's be honest, proclaiming a crucified man as risen from the dead would not have been an easy sell even for famous Roman orators. How would these fishermen and tax collectors have gone to the ends of the earth to plant a made-up story of the resurrection?
 - 5) In proclaiming the Gospel, moreover, they were ostracized from their religion, repeatedly beaten and ultimately killed. Why would they have gone through all of this unless they had truly seen the Lord rise from the dead, just as they testified?
 - a) If the disciples had stolen the body of Jesus, they would have known that he had died the death of a deluded fanatic, and that he had not risen from the dead. Why should the disciples conspire to impose upon the world a new religion which they knew to be false?
 - b) A spontaneous falsehood, as Origen pointed out, could not have nerved the disciples to announce with such unflinching courage a doctrine which was so perilous in its probable consequences. What occult compensation could have nerved them to break with their Church and their friends, and to accept martyrdom in the propagation of what they themselves knew to be a monstrous and superfluous lie.
 - c) "I readily believe", wrote Pascal, "those witnesses who get their throats cut."
 - 6) St. Thomas Aquinas says that all types of people were converted to "Christ, wise, noble, rich, powerful and great men at the preaching of simple men, who were both poor and few. This was either done miraculously or not. If it was done miraculously my point is proved. If it was not, I say that there could not be a greater miracle than that all the world should have been converted without miracles" (*De Symbolo Apostolico*).
 - 7) If the story of Christ's resurrection had been invented we may be very sure that the discovery of the empty tomb would not have been attributed to women. "The mind of the first century about women", writes H. Nunn, in his valuable book "What is Modernism?" "even in Christian circles is clearly seen in the Epistles and in the First Gospel

where we are told that the disciples marveled that our Lord even spoke to a woman.... If the story is true, no further explanation of the important part played in it by women is needed. It is only another proof of the honesty of the witnesses of the Resurrection who admitted the slowness and lack of faith of the Apostles and the ready faith of the women."

d) St. Paul's case was slightly different, but in some ways even more powerful an example.

1) He was a Christian KILLER, terrorizing the Christians of the 30s like Nero did in the 60s.

Acts 7:58 Then they dragged him out of the city and began to stone him; and the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. **Acts 8:1** And Saul approved of their killing him. That day a severe persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout the countryside of Judea and Samaria.

Acts 8:3 But Saul was ravaging the church by entering house after house; dragging off both men and women, he committed them to prison.

Acts 9:1 Meanwhile Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest

- 2) Why would he have changed all of a sudden and become a Christian when it would have meant the loss of his position within the Jewish authorities as well as the fact that the Jewish authorities would put a contract on his head for the rest of his days?
- 3) Yet this extraordinarily intelligent man said in simple, highly believable language, "Last of all, as to one untimely born, Jesus appeared also to me."
- 4) Again, either Paul was a liar, completely deceived, or telling the truth.
- 5) The evidence is overwhelmingly in favor of his telling the truth, as with all of the other witnesses.

VI. Practical consequences for us

- 1) What do we gain from this? We learn more than just the evidence for a debate with non-Christians. We learn ultimately two things.
 - a) To be a credible witness to an event, you had to have experienced it. Because we were not present 1971 years ago when Jesus rose from the dead, how can we be a witness?
 - b) Only if we have experienced the Risen Lord ourselves personally, experienced an encounter with him. We do through all of the Sacraments and through prayer, but do we realize this?
- 3) The second thing we can grasp is that the persuasiveness of the testimony of the resurrection is on the basis of the credibility of one's lived faith, on the credibility of the Gospel we preach by our actions.
 - a) The apostles were credible because they could not possibly have had "mixed motives" in proclaiming the Gospel. Either it was true, or they were deceived, but what was excluded was their proclaiming a falsehood for personal benefit.
 - b) This is still the case of Christian credibility today. Why was Mother Teresa's lived Gospel so persuasive to so many people, Christians and non-Christians alike? Her example was so powerful because it was all love. She had nothing to gain financially from spending her nearly 50 years lovingly caring for the maggot-infested dying people in Calcutta. Her vocation, and those of the sisters in her community she founded, could not possibly be understood as a "good career

move!” And yet she joyfully proclaimed that they were doing it out of nothing but love for Jesus, which left those who observed her with one of two possible responses: either she was benevolently deluded or she really was inspired by a living relationship with Jesus Christ, just as she said.

4) It’s the same thing with us. We’re called to live the Christian life with such joyful, self-giving heroism that proclaims to everyone that we REALLY BELIEVE the Great News that Jesus lives, that he loves us, and that we love him — and leave them with the choice that either we’re crazy or we’re right!

a) We’re ultimately called to give witness to the world that Jesus is someone worth LIVING for completely and, if need be, worth DYING for.

Luke 24:45 Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, 46 and he said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, 47 and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. 48 You are witnesses of these things. 49 And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.” 50 Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and, lifting up his hands, he blessed them. 51 While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven.

Acts 5:32 And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him.”

b) He certainly was for the first apostles. He certainly was as well for Mother Teresa and countless others through the centuries.

c) May we follow their example and be witnesses of this Greatest News Ever Told to others!

d) Jesus has truly risen! And this fact changes everything! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

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