

Homily for Easter II – 2020.

On the Sunday when we hear in the gospel of the doubt of St Thomas who refused to believe until he had seen the physical marks of the passion on the risen Christ, I think of all the non-believers I know and they are legion. My faith never comes under direct attack from my non-believing friends but I have so often heard this line from them, or words to this effect... “Well James, I respect your faith but I’ll believe there is a God and life after death when someone comes back and proves it but not before.” Usually, I reply by saying ... “someone has come back and that person is Jesus Christ, and you can read about his Resurrection in the four gospels.” The most common reply to that remark is usually something along these lines.... “Nah.. I’m not religious, thanks. I don’t need God, church or the Bible to be as good as anyone else. My motto is do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”

The modern secularists - my friends overwhelmingly - just want to be left alone to live what they consider to be a ‘good life,’ to have a decent job, to find a congenial partner and have a family, own a home, rear their children and launch them into a life just like theirs. They don’t want to murder, rape, pillage, plunder or burn. They see themselves as being ‘good’ people and in a certain sense they are. They’ll be on the school committee, help at the local footy club, give to the Red Cross, do the neighbour’s lawns when needed and so forth. The last thing they want is to go to church on Sundays. A sleep in followed by a leisurely breakfast is so much better. There is no God. Everything began with the big bang. Here we are, let’s just accept that and get on with living a good life in the time that’s allotted to us, because there is nothing else to do.

How does one speak of the resurrection of Jesus Christ to such a world view? Where does one even begin? I wish I knew the answer to that question.

Traditionally, Christian apologetics began its engagement with doubters and non-believers by seeking to present the logical reasons why it is prudent and sensible to believe that there is an all powerful being who is the author of all that there is and that being we call God. Until WWII most people who had received a tertiary education and everyone who had received a Christian secondary education would have had some familiarity with what are called the arguments for the existence of God.

For 75 years now, the reverse has been more and more the case. Almost nobody would know of those arguments today and fewer still would feel confident to express them in a discussion or a debate. Because they are never heard, there is now in western society a very well established mind set that sees Christianity as a religion without any philosophical credibility. A religion that is anti-science, a religion that requires childish credulity about things like virgin birth, miracles and resurrection. A religion that might be OK for the ignorant, credulous and uneducated but a religion that does not cut the mustard for modern man who is proudly secular and who rejects out of hand any notion of a divine being who is the creator and sustainer, let alone redeemer of all that there is.

It should come as no surprise that along with the dismissal of Christianity as a religion for feeble minds only, goes a rejection of the whole of Christian civilisation, Christian morality, and the entire Christian world view.

Let's bring this present situation to the level of where we find that proverbial person, the man in the street. He (or she) now thinks that the Big Bang theory of the beginnings of the universe and all that there is, along with Darwin's theory of evolution, has demolished any notion of God. There just isn't one. And secondly, he or she rejects any idea of absolute morality that comes from a supreme being. What is good or right depends on the circumstances one finds one's self caught up in and it has nothing at all to do with God and God's commandments, because there is no God. There are no absolutes, truth is something the modern secular person must construct for himself or herself.

These days the 'man in the street' has gone beyond doubt. He or she no longer believes there is any evidence for God and certainly none for the resurrection of Jesus Christ. There are three responses that believers can make.

The first takes many forms and succinctly it is... 'don't look at me'. We say that by making our faith invisible. The fact that we are Christian is never mentioned. If ever matters of belief, religion or morality are discussed we keep our mouths shut. While I was your Vicar a lovely man who attended this church regularly and faithfully once said to me that he would NEVER let on that he was a Christian amongst his peers or at his place of work as he'd be scorned and ridiculed. So that's the first response.. duck for cover. Sadly but understandably, its very common but it is never acceptable.

The second response could be to endeavour to learn how reasonable, prudent, sensible and thoroughly scientific it is to believe in God. There is a mighty work needing to

be done here by well educated believers. There are something like 20 good arguments for believing in God. They are still good arguments and the modern rationalists have dis-proven nothing at all. Yes, they have the ear of the media but their arguments against the rationality of believing in God simply do not hold water.

For example, the Big Bang theory disproves nothing about God whatsoever. On the contrary, it points to the logical need for an all powerful creator and it does so from a basic scientific premise which is the premise that absolutely nothing happens without a logical cause. There is not one single thing in the created order that does not have its cause. Every scientist worth his salt knows that for a fact. The scientific method depends upon it. And yet we are encouraged to believe by popular science (pseudoscience is a better term for it) that the Big Bang has explained the origins of all that there is without any reference to, or need of God. They are in effect claiming that while you can't get anything at all from nothing in the created order... somehow, at the very beginning, everything came from nothing! Its laughable, yet popular misconception believes it because of a complete lack of intellectual rigour which characterises the modern educational method since the second world war.

A third response for believers is to hold fast to belief and 'own up' when queried, if I might put it that way. Do you believe in God? Yes. Do you believe in Jesus Christ as Saviour? Yes. Do you believe he died on the cross? I know he did. It's a fact beyond dispute. Do you believe he rose from the dead? Yes. There is no other credible answer to why the tomb was empty after 3 days. Do you go to church every Sunday? Yes. Why do you go? Because God wants us to worship him. How do you know that? The Bible says so. Can't I be a good person just worshipping God at home and doing all sorts of helpful things? No, if you know God's will is that you should worship him with other believers, you must do it.... And on and on it can go. There are simple, straightforward answers every faithful person can make as to why we believe and why our faith is at the very centre of who we are, how we think and what we do.

Its well worth making those simple answers. Nobody has to be a genius or a walking encyclopaedia before they confess their faith. Its not a matter of arguing or winning.. its a matter of confessing what is essential to who I am as a Christian.

I believe in God. My faith and hope is in Jesus Christ crucified and risen from the dead. He gives me positive direction in every aspect of my daily living. I'm proud to be member of His church and really wish you would become one too because life is so much better with God. Now..... there's a straightforward statement from the heart for the doubters of our time.