

Statement for Website
From Fr. Michael Basque

19 April 2020

When I was in elementary and high school, Science was my favourite subject. I liked Science because its conclusions were based on evidence which could be seen, heard or touched. I liked it because it was based on logic: if one thing was true, you could deduce that other things were also true. Finally, I liked it because you could test ideas to see if they were true through an experiment. However, as much as I liked Science, I recognized there were limits to what you could know by using it. For example, there is no way for Science to “prove” that a mother loves her child. When a baby cries in the middle of the night, does the mother get up because she loves her child or in order to get back to sleep. There are essential truths in life which must be accepted without scientific proof; in other words they are can act of faith.

In today’s Gospel, the risen Christ provides Thomas and the other disciples with physical evidence of his resurrection, although he warns them those who have faith without the need for such evidence are in a better position. When Thomas is told about the resurrection of Jesus by the other disciples you can understand why he might be a little skeptical. Over the previous few days, the man whom he had left everything to follow was betrayed, arrested, tried and executed. Thomas’ entire world had been shattered. While many Jews during that period believed there would be a resurrection, it would involve everyone at the end of time. Thomas likely thought the other disciples had been dreaming Jesus was alive or trying to fool him. He wants evidence and is specific about it: he wants to put his finger in the nail holes on Christ’s hands and touch his wounded side. Yet, because he sets those conditions, he is at least open to the possibility that what they are saying might be true. When Jesus returns, he satisfies Thomas’ demands. The apostle responds with the clearest statement of faith in John’s Gospel: “My Lord and my God”. However, Jesus also warns Thomas and the others that while faith based on physical evidence is acceptable, faith based on other sources, like witness testimony, is stronger because it shows greater trust in God. Two thousand years later, the only evidence Christians have of Christ’s resurrection is the Scriptures. They were not written to satisfy the modern need for scientific data or historical accuracy, but to provide testimony to bolster the faith of Christ’s followers. Jesus was speaking to us when he talked about those who have not seen and yet come to believe.

Within our modern culture, the relationship between Science and Religion has often been uneasy. In the past, religious institutions (including the Catholic Church) have persecuted scientists who challenged established ideas and were later vindicated. Representatives of the scientific community have ridiculed religious belief as superstition and often extended their influence into areas over which they have limited competence like ethics. Yet, both genuine Science and genuine Religion are pursuing the same thing: truth (although different dimensions of it). Each should respect each other’s expertise and restrict their efforts to what they can do well. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the need for cooperation is even more urgent. Many religious people are suspicious of science. Yet, it is scientific expertise which will help stop the spread of the virus and find a vaccine. Many scientists think they can do without Religion. Yet, Religious institutions provide assistance to those in need and the ethical guidelines to insure everyone benefits from the process and fruits of scientific research.

The kind of faith we need today is like that Jesus talked about in today's Gospel. We need to have faith not in just the evidence we can see, hear and touch but those things we cannot; our ability to work together, persevere and trust that God will see us through this crisis.