

Easter Sunday 2008

LESSON: Irreversible Victory, Undeniable Credibility

Jesus, the crucified one, has now been raised from the dead.
The Lord is Risen! He is TRULY Risen! (did they get it?)

Utter defeat has been transformed into **irreversible victory**.
Evil has had its way with God's anointed, the Messiah.

- ? It did all it could to **break down** the courage and faithfulness of Jesus, our Savior.
- ? It used up all its **weapons** of hate, injustice, humiliation, and pain.
- ? It fought an impressive, bloody fight - but God's **Anointed One** came out victorious.

And what does that mean for us? It means **everything**, absolutely everything. The resurrection is the stamp that **validates** everything Jesus did and said:

- ? His claim to be God's Son, to have authority to forgive sin and reestablish communion between God and man;
- ? His universal call to abandon self-centeredness for love of God and neighbor as the path to true happiness;
- ? His promise to give grace through a Church that will endure forever.

If Jesus had **not** been raised, **none** of that would be worth listening to!

- ? He would have been just one more **nice guy who finished last**, one more dreamer whose dreams were crushed by the harsh reality of real life.



This is why whenever people start living a life that is contrary to the way of life and teachings and example of Christ; they always **raise doubts** about the **reality** of the resurrection and of the Church.

- ? After all, if Christ **didn't** rise from the dead, He has no more authority over our lives than Socrates or Confucius or Buddha or Mohammad, or even Dr Phil.
- ? But, Jesus **did** rise from the dead. His victory over evil and falsehood and injustice and suffering is **total**, incontrovertible, and **irreversible**.
- ? In the face of twenty centuries filled with a steady stream of saints, an unchecked growth of the Catholic Church, and an

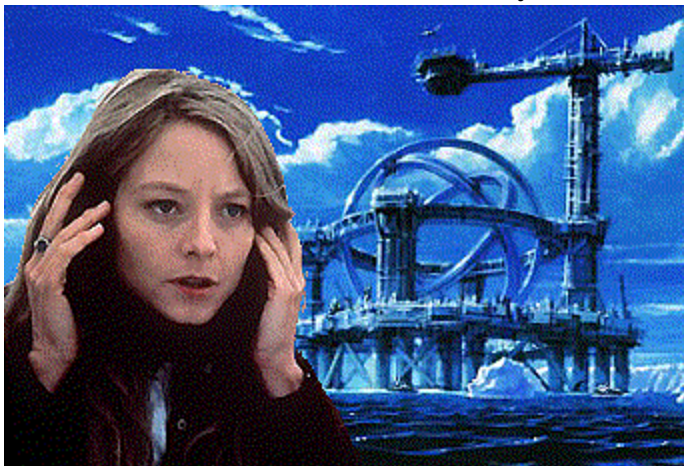
unquenchable Christian vitality, how can a person deny it?

ILLUSTRATION: “Contact” – Do you believe, or not?

If you know me, you know that I’m a big sci-fi fan – *Star Trek*, space adventures, life in outer space – it all fascinates me. So, back in the mid-90’s I was really excited about a movie coming out: a movie called “Contact.”



- ✍ It’s a story about Ellie Arrowway, an astronomer, who is working on a radio-telescope project to discover life “out there” in the universe.
- ✍ She and her team stumble across a radio message from space that, surprisingly, has instructions embedded in it.
- ✍ The instructions tell them how to build a machine that will help them travel to the planet from which the message originated.
- ✍ After much coaxing, everyone around the world gets “on board” and contributes to help build the machine – to discover the truth about life in outer space.
- ✍ Part of the story involves Ellie’s involvement with a young preacher, Palmer.
- ✍ We discover, as the story unfolds, that Ellie is an agnostic – someone who isn’t sure whether God exists or not – so they decide not to decide.



- ✍ “We can’t PROVE that God exists” Ellie tells Palmer “so until someone can prove it to me, I won’t decide to believe in God.”
- ✍ The travel machine is built – and Ellie is chosen to be the first to travel to this new world in outer space.
- ✍ She’s transported there and discovers incredible things on this “other world.” She learns many

things about the wonders of the universe and, as a result, about humanity.

- ✍ Ellie spent about 2 weeks on this other planet before returning back to earth.
- ✍ BUT, here on earth, Ellie had spent only a matter of minutes in the machine.
- ✍ No one believed Ellie’s story. She couldn’t prove it to anyone – but she knew her experience was real.
- ✍ The only person who did believe her was her preacher friend, Palmer – the one who had a lot of experience believing in something that could not be proved... or can it be?

Christ's resurrection is what makes Christianity able to be proven.

Jesus Christ claimed to have the secret to eternal life, to a lastingly meaningful life, to the kind of happiness that we all yearn for with all our being.

- ? Others have made similar claims: Buddha, Confucius, Mohammad,
- ? And yet, have any of them passed the test? Even one?

Only Christ has won the **irreversible** victory and shown **undeniable** credibility, by rising from the dead.

APPLICATION: Living Sunday Right

This morning we should rejoice in the great victory Christ has won for us by his resurrection and thank him for giving us a share in it – for allowing us to experience it – just as Ellie experienced life on that other world.

How **different** our day-to-day lives would be if we believed this truth with our whole hearts! We know the future! We know what's in store! So, how can we let the power of Christ's resurrection seep into the depths of our minds and hearts?

There is one very simple thing we can do that will make all the difference: **Keep the Lord's Day Holy!**



- ? **Every Sunday** of the year is a solemnity, a day dedicated to the cornerstone of our faith: the Resurrection.
- ? This is why the Church has made Sunday Mass **obligatory** - to make sure we don't **forget** about the Resurrection! To make sure we **remember** where we're going and what it's all about!



But we need to do our part:

- ? Coming to Mass is the **essential**.
- ? But if we want to live our Sundays to the full, if we want our lives to take on the rhythm of the Resurrection, we have got to use our creativity and imagination to make the **whole day different**.
- ? The way a Catholic lives Sunday should be **different** than the way a non-Catholic lives Sunday.
- ? I've been getting lots of questions lately about how to live on Sunday:
 - o It is right to shop? Is it right to work in the garden? Is it right to go to a professional ball game or even watch it on TV?
 - o Well, back in 1998, Pope John Paul II wrote an Encyclical entitled *Dies Domini – the Day of the Lord* in which he addressed how we should observe Sundays...
 - o In our own historical context there remains the obligation to ensure that **everyone** can enjoy the freedom, rest and relaxation which human dignity requires, together with the



associated religious, family, cultural and interpersonal needs which are difficult to meet if there is no guarantee of at least one day of the week on which people can *both rest and celebrate*” (DD 66). – Does my shopping, watching football on TV, going to dinner **hinder someone else** from observing a “day of rest and celebration of God?” How many times people tell me they can’t come to Mass because they have to work – this tells me, YES – our Sunday activities DO hinder others from observing Sunday as the Lord’s Day.



- And so, John Paul continued “...[People] are obliged in conscience to arrange their Sunday rest in a way which allows them to take part in the Eucharist, refraining from work and activities which are incompatible with the sanctification of the Lord's Day, with its characteristic joy and necessary rest for spirit and body (112)” (DD 67).
- How you do that is up to your individual conscience – but do it you must, not for God, not for me, but **for God**.

Today, the greatest Sunday of the year, let's honor the Lord not only with our voices, but also in our hearts. Let's promise him that between now and Pentecost we will use our creativity **to make our Sundays different**. And let's ask God to put our skepticism and doubt behind us – **believe, and LIVE** the new life Christ gains for us through His glorious resurrection from the dead.

