

April 3, 2016  
The Second Sunday of Easter  
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When I was in college, here at the University of Oklahoma, I majored in journalism and from there I worked as a newspaper reporter for 20 years. As reporters and editors, we learn early in our training and in our day-to-day work that one of the primary tenets of journalism, of reporting the news, is accuracy because without it you lose credibility. And when you lose credibility, you lose trust, which cannot happen.

Now, a lot of what passes as “news” nowadays, especially on cable television, radio and web sites, is not firsthand reporting at all, but rather opinion or commentary on the news, which is subjective. You would hope that people base their opinions and commentaries on facts and solid reasoning, but at the end of the day, consultants, spokespeople and regular folks on social media can and do say whatever they want.

But when you talk about actual news gathering and reporting of people and events -- not reactions to the news, but the news itself -- that’s where accuracy and credibility is of utmost importance. Getting your facts straight is so important, so crucial, that there’s a longtime saying among journalists -- “If your mother tells you she loves you, check it out.” In other words, verify *everything* before you write *anything*. Double check and verify to make sure you’ve got your facts straight. Don’t just take someone’s word for it, no matter who that person is.

Well, the apostle Thomas would have made an excellent hard-nosed newsroom editor, or a proud resident of Missouri, the Show-Me State. Some disciples had seen the resurrected Jesus and they described the awe-inspiring experience. Thomas knew that Jesus was very special, that he was the Son of God and that he had performed miracles. Otherwise, he wouldn’t have been a loyal follower of Christ. Even so, hanging out with a dear friend a few days after that person dies is not exactly commonplace. That sort of thing just doesn’t happen every millennium.

So when Thomas hears talk of a resurrected Jesus, he responds by saying, “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.” In other words, “When your closest friends tell you the Lord is risen indeed, check it out.” He demanded proof to believe in a resurrected Jesus that he had not seen.

Well, as we know, Thomas did come around to believing that Jesus had indeed risen. Thomas saw the Lord with his own two eyes. And when that happened, one full week after Thomas first heard about the resurrection and scoffed, he exclaimed, “My Lord and my God!” But notice Jesus’ response to Thomas, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet come to believe.”

Those who have not seen, and yet come to believe. How can one believe what he or she hasn’t seen? Going back to news reporting, there are two ways to get accurate information for an article. You can actually go to the event, experience it firsthand as it unfolds, and then report you saw and heard. Or, if you’re covering an event after it happens, or writing about its ongoing aftermath -- or if you are writing an in-depth piece about a complex issue, then you count on reliable sources for your information.

A reliable source can be a trustworthy person who has consistently given you good information, like a reporter’s main contact at the police station. You weren’t there when the crime happened, but you know that your police media contact will give you fast and accurate information as the investigation unfolds.

By the way, in case you were wondering, your mom counts as a very reliable source when it comes to love and family. So if she says she loves you, it’s OK to believe her. That saying was merely a metaphor to drive home the importance to drive home the importance of accuracy.

Anyway, the biggest news in the history of mankind was the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus. It paved our way to salvation, it is the greatest manifestation of God’s love for us all, and the resurrection proved

that death can be conquered. The Scriptures give us the most reliable of sources of these events -- and of the ongoing story of the resurrection and what it means for us Laura pointed out last week.

In Acts, when the apostles were brought before the temple police and chastised for preaching about Jesus, the apostles said in reference to the remarkable events of Jesus' life that "we are witnesses of these things," and check this out,, "and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him." That means us, down to this day.

Similarly, the Gospel reading ends with "these things were 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." So that **we** may have everlasting life in Christ's name.

You see, the apostles and other early Christians who spent time with Jesus gave us the scoop, by means of the Scriptures, so that we can all stop the presses and run this amazing story that will forever make the front page of our lives. We don't yet know every detail on how the resurrection and afterlife works, and our church often mentions the mysteries of God, but we can be confident that each of us will get those news updates when our time comes.

What we do know in this life, again from very reliable sources, is that God loves us dearly, that Christ has been raised from the dead -- which we celebrate year-round but especially during this Easter season -- that each of us here can look forward to life everlasting, that we have been called upon to share the story of Christ's life and resurrection with others, and that we are a blessed people because though we have not seen, we have come to believe.

The collect in the New Zealand prayer book for today, the first Sunday after Easter, sums it up beautifully like this, "Eternal Father, through the resurrection of your Son, help us to face the future with courage and assurance knowing that nothing in death or life can ever part us from your love."

So whenever your mother, or anyone else, tells you Christ is risen, the Lord is risen indeed!" You can take it to the bank. But feel free to check it out. Amen.