

2nd Sunday of Easter
04/23/17

Jesuit Mark Link asks that you imagine yourself in a shopping mall, when a group of college students asks you to participate in a psychology experiment. You are blindfolded and a cardboard box is placed at your feet, touching your toes. Now they ask you to ascertain if the box is empty or contains a rabbit. How would you go about it?

There are three ways to approach this. You could bend down, stick your hand in the box, and determine if there is, in fact, a rabbit inside. This is gaining knowledge by direct experience, using your senses. Or you could pick up the box and judge by its weight. This would be gaining knowledge through reasoning or deduction. Lastly, you could simply call out to a passerby and ask if there is a rabbit in the box. This would be learning by belief or placing faith in another.

Of the three ways of gaining knowledge, which would you suspect is most important and the one used most often? If you answered faith, you would be correct. Scientists say we gain more than 75% of all our knowledge by accepting the word of others. And this should not surprise us.

How often do we look at those darn nutrition labels on the food we buy and take the values shown as fact? How would we even begin to check the numbers? I know some of you are going to stop me after Mass and let me know exactly how to verify the numbers; I just know it. But I hope you see my point – for the average shopper, the numbers are all taken on faith.

If we derive $\frac{3}{4}$ of what we know on faith or the testimony of another, why do we become defensive, embarrassed, or even cower when it comes to our Christian faith? When we are asked by a rationalistic or scientific mind how we can believe in a God we have never seen or believe in the Resurrection of Jesus, we are speechless. But we shouldn't be. After all, how much of our faith is based on the testimony of others? And this testimony dates back to the Apostles, all but one of whom die as martyrs.

Over and over, Jesus told them He would suffer and die yet when it happened, they all fled in fear. Over and over, Jesus told them He would rise from the dead, that He would come back to them and yet when He did come back, they couldn't believe it, couldn't believe their own senses. However, once they understood what was happening, not only did they believe, they became the proclaimers of that belief.

You've heard it from me and I'm sure from many others, that we are now the hands and feet of Jesus. We are the witnesses to the faith that started in that locked upper room. As one author puts it, Jesus did not leave the world without a visible witness to the resurrection. He left a tangible, observable, visible presence for anyone and everyone to see – He left the Church, you and me.

In his Letter, *The Joy of the Gospel*, Pope Francis said something that may shed some light on why the doors were locked. Addressing the danger of closing off our minds and/or our communities, Francis said the following: "More than by fear of going astray, my hope is that we will be moved by the fear of remaining shut up within structures which give us a false sense of security, within rules which make us harsh judges, within habits which make us feel safe, while at our door people are starving and Jesus does not tire of saying to us: 'Give them something to eat'"

In the lives and witness and actions of believers like you and me, the world can see a sign of the resurrection, and a proof of Easter, and maybe some scars on us, too. How else could the timid and frightened disciples unlock the door and leave the upper room and face the very accusers and murderers of their Lord as faithful witness to His Resurrection? We are now to be the visible sign to the world. Let the world hear us and see us. If we do our job, perhaps hearing and seeing may lead to their believing. God help us and it may actually be so.