

The Eagle

St. John Lutheran Church + Houghton Lake, Michigan 48629
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The View From Here **Mind and Faith**

What a glorious day!! I have no idea with what the weather might be surprising you as you read this, but it's a glorious day when you consider Holy Week and Easter Sunday just celebrated. **EVERY** day is a glorious day because of the fact of our Lord's Resurrection. Why? Because we can face every day knowing that no matter what it may bring us we have the promise of a much more glorious future through Christ's atonement for our sins, the forgiveness it brings and the promise of our own resurrection because of His resurrection on the third day ... sin, death, hell and Satan have been ultimately defeated!! Therefore, we can have joy every day. Perhaps not every day is a happy one, but it certainly is joyful!

I'd like to share a question I've heard expressed by both believers and unbelievers. I think it's a question which has to do with the mind and how the church has responded to its use. The question is two-fold. First, why would God give us the ability to be reasonable, logical, and then not expect us to use those very qualities when it comes to faith? Some folks outside the Church, have the opinion that the church doesn't like it when people think. We all sometimes hear this answer to our questions ... *"You just have to receive these things on faith."* There are those who hear that and think: *"the Church wants me to switch my brain off and then just buy into whatever it says without reason, rationale, or questioning."* I know from where these folks are coming. I was there once myself back when I was in jr. high and high school. I remember asking questions--what I believed were good questions--and being told, *"You'll just have to believe."*

That answer struck me a lot of different ways. The first thing that struck me was that it made me frustrated. Then I started to think, "My teacher doesn't know the answer and he's hiding behind the line, 'You just have to believe.' Eventually I started to question all kinds of things about the faith. But I stuck with my plan since the 6th grade, having gone through much doubt and struggle through the years and ended up graduating from college and the seminary and being ordained into the office of the holy ministry. With the help of the Holy Spirit, great parents, siblings, and world-class professors and teachers, I calmed down and started to do some serious investigating over the years.

I eventually came to the conclusion that first, there are some things, a small, select group of things we can't understand. BUT... that doesn't mean we should shut down our brains. For instance, I can't understand, and nobody in the religious world or the scientific community can completely explain, the concept of eternity. We can define it as something that has no beginning or end, but we can't grasp the idea. We can't understand it fully because everything else seems to have a beginning and a definite ending. Eternity, then, doesn't fit into our finite thought processes.

I also found out that, more often than not, when somebody in the religious world said, *"We just have to receive this by faith,"* it very often meant *"I don't want to..."* or *"I don't know how to..."*, or *"I don't want to take the time to..."* or *"I just don't know the facts which enable me to explain."* But God wants us to use our brains! For example ... Did Jesus rise from the dead on the third day after He was crucified? That is the central doctrine of Christianity and the one which has been challenged in recent years. Nobody around today has seen the risen Jesus, so do we have to shut off our brains and just believe? No! We have to believe without seeing, but we don't have to shut off our brains.

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Let me amplify just a bit. Do we know Jesus was really dead when they laid Him in the tomb? Absolutely! How do we know that? The Bible says when the Roman guard stabbed Jesus with his spear, blood and water came out. Modern medicine tells us that condition only occurs after someone has died. Do we know nobody stole Jesus' body? Absolutely! There was a guard at Jesus' tomb. That guard wouldn't have guarded an empty tomb. Jesus' body was there...and then it wasn't. I don't believe the disciples would be willing to be martyred and die for a lie, nor would anyone. The Gospels are full of undeniable truths that can be and are supported by facts. God doesn't ask us to check our brains in at the door of the church when we arrive. Consider 1 Peter 3:15-¹⁵*but in your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a DEFENSE to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you;* We must be willing and able to DEFEND the faith ... that takes some thought processes. So, we believe but we also think.

That's the View from Here

Pastor William Winter