

Erick Weihenmayer was the blind mountaineer who successfully scaled Mount Everest in 2001. A few days after he arrived for the Mount Everest climb, a rumor began circulating that he was faking his blindness. Because he wasn't flopping on his face every few minutes, the Sherpas thought he was lying about his blindness. Women would approach him in the alleys and wave their hands in front of his face. He'd feel the wind and flinch, which only confirmed their suspicions.

Finally, he resorted to drastic measures. He asked his climbing leader, into the kitchen tent. He said to him, "I want to give you a message to take back to the Sherpas." He pulled down his left lower eyelid, and leaned his head forward, and his prosthetic eye plopped into his palm. After that, he said, "I can take the other out if you want," I said. "No!" he said firmly. "Not necessary!"

Jesus had to do something similar: convince them he was not a ghost, but truly risen from the dead. He had to show them his hands and feet and I suspect some of them rooted their fingers on the wounds. He then munched down on some fish sticks for good measure. After that, the Apostles never looked back and witnessed what they had seen.

The bible tells us that 500 others also gave eyewitness accounts of seeing Jesus risen from the tomb.

+Charles Colson, convicted for his involvement in the Watergate scandal as an assistant to President Richard Nixon, believed them, as well. He contrasted his coworkers to the disciples of Jesus. All his coworkers, he said, attested to their dying loyalty for Nixon, but when John Dean turned state's evidence they were all singing like canaries, turning on one another.

Not so with Jesus' Apostles, none of them cracked or turned upon one another, even at the risk of death. Nothing less than a resurrected Christ could have caused those men to maintain to their dying whispers that Jesus is alive and is Lord.

For most of us, however it will not be so obvious as it was for the disciples that Jesus has risen. Our Scriptures provide us with a subtler means to do so.

1. The readings remind us that the purpose of the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus was to save us from our sins. *Understand that he suffered for us*, said Peter. Think about those in your lives who have suffered for you.

+One man told me that his wife labored 36 hours before giving birth to their first son. She can surely, later in his life, remind him of this, "I suffered 36 hours to give you life." Such an awareness should certainly lead to repentance for one's sins.

Knowing how my parents suffered for me, in prayers during difficult times of my life, should lead me to live a better life. I think of parents working all kinds of hours to get that child a college education.

You hear of families in which this is the first child of many generations to do so and they do everything for them. That leads to a greater motivation for that child to give his or her best efforts to be the first to graduate. How much more so for the sufferings of the Lord for us.

2. This awareness of what God has done for us, his suffering, should lead us to trust him, esp. when we are suffering. We link our suffering with his suffering. When life is crazy and everything appears to be going wrong, our whispered prayer is, "Jesus I trust in you. Jesus I trust in you."

And so you survive, he has led you through it. We all have our stories don't we? Something we have emerged from and made it to the other side.

3. And that trust then leads us to faith.

+Theologian Alister McGrath uses an analogy to a bottle of penicillin. The drug is responsible for saving the lives of countless individuals who would otherwise have died from various forms of blood poisoning.

He said think of the stages of faith like this. I may accept that the bottle exists, but I may trust in its ability to cure blood poisoning.

But nothing will change unless I receive the drug which it contains. I must allow it to destroy the bacteria which are slowly killing me. Otherwise, I have not benefited from my faith in it. We believe in Jesus to protect us from what may be killing our soul. We know only he can do so, as we submit our will for his will.

It is the third element of faith which is of vital importance in making sense of the cross. Just as faith links a bottle of penicillin to the cure of blood poisoning, so a link between and resurrection of Jesus Christ and ourselves. Faith forges the cross. If we die with him, we shall rise with him.

Faith unites us with the risen Christ, and makes available to us everything he gained through his obedience and resurrection. This is not something that just happens out of the blue, for no reason. No, there are reasons that we take such steps.

It's not blind faith ... You don't cross in belief by closing your eyes and wishing Jesus' resurrection was true. No. You cross with your eyes wide open.

This is an informed faith, faith in a historical plausible resurrection, attested by hundreds of witnesses and to the many generations that followed them, one proven to be worth believing. That is what got you to church today.

4. To summarize: the awareness that he suffered for us, bringing repentance of our sins, should lead us to trust him. Trusting him, leads to faith and thus a renewal of our lives that will lead us to the final stage of our faith:

We witness to what *we have seen* through our *eyes of faith* in the *life we live*.