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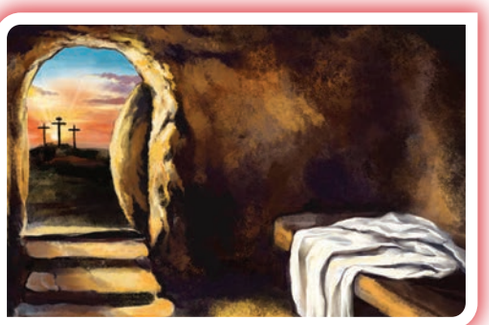
MARCH 2023 Letter

There Are Scientific and Historical Reasons To Believe In The Resurrection

By Christine Corbett Conklin

We live in an age of skepticism, when so many people lack the faith to believe in miracles. "Show me the proof," they're likely to suggest. Happily, when it comes of the miracle of Jesus' Resurrection, we have scientific evidence and historical accounts – everything we need to substantiate the events of that first Easter day.



One of the most remarkable proofs of Jesus' suffering, death and Resurrection is the **Shroud of Turin**, the burial cloth which carries the impression of Our Lord's face and wounds. Countless scientific tests through the years have ruled out any evidence of forgery such as ink, dyes or photographic work. The image could only have been created by a superhuman surge of energy and light – such as one created as Our Lord came back to life through the power of the Creator, most researchers surmise.

Secondly, we have the **accounts of the four Gospels**. "The Gospels are not just stories. They are actual, factual accounts of real-life events that shaped history and the Christian faith," reports cru.org, the website of the Campus Crusade for Christ.

And the testimonies don't stop there. "Some scholars estimate that there are about **30 surviving independent sources** written by 25 authors who attest to Jesus," according to wikipedia.com. "Non-Christian sources that are used to study and establish the historicity of Jesus include Jewish sources such as Josephus, and Roman sources such as Tacitus. These sources are compared to Christian sources such as the Pauline Epistles and the (Gospels). These sources are usually independent of each other."

The next piece of evidence is the **empty tomb**. "Because the location of Jesus' burial was known to those living in Jerusalem, it is unlikely that they would have believed the apostles' claims about the Resurrection of Christ if there was not an empty tomb," suggests an article entitled, *What is the Proof and Evidence of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ?*, on the website christianity.com. "The fact that women are primary witnesses to the empty tomb….is further evidence of their authenticity," the site explains. "This is because, as is often noted, women were not considered reliable witnesses in first-century Jewish culture, so it would have been foolish for the authors to fictionally construct an account involving women to gain credibility."

Some have tried to suggest that Jesus' body was stolen or removed from the tomb by his followers. Yet, **the body of Jesus was never found** and the shroud in which he was wrapped was "neatly left behind," notes thegospelcoalition.org. "**(T)he grave had been guarded by Roman soldiers**; and **no one ever claimed to have stolen the body**. **The presence of the grave clothes (is) significant**. It was the spices attached to the cloth that had value. Anyone removing the body for profit or mischief would have taken the wrapped body away and separated out the valuable mixture at their leisure…."

So, what about the theory that Jesus never actually died? A few have suggested that maybe He just revived and escaped. "It is unlikely that a half-dead man would have been capable of even getting up to walk, much less moving the huge stone that sealed the tomb, overpowering the Roman guards, and fleeing from sight," emphasizes christianity.com. This theory also cannot explain how **Jesus' disciples testified to His Resurrection**, for if He was revived, they would merely have thought He never died, the site adds. Also, the Romans were likely to have ensured that Jesus was dead. And, considering the tremendous torture He endured, "it is highly **unlikely that Jesus could have survived crucifixion**."

We also need to consider that "many of the **principal eyewitnesses to the resurrection of Jesus died** because of their

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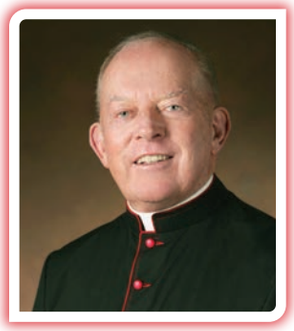
Convention Center Event To Honor Monsignor Ecker, Benefit Christ The Teacher School

There's still time to purchase tickets for a fundraiser dinner and auction benefiting Christ the Teacher Catholic School, set for Friday, April 14 at the Yakima Convention Center. The event's special honoree will be Monsignor John Ecker, vicar general of the Diocese of Yakima and pastor of St. Paul Cathedral, who is celebrating his 90th birthday and the 65th anniversary of his ordination.

"Feed My Lambs" is the theme of the event, sponsored by the Monsignor Ecker Foundation. The fundraiser will feature Andrew Kuffner, Ed.D., as guest speaker. Kuffner, who is Lasallian Director of Formation for Mission in the District of San Francisco, will discuss "Service and Gratitude."

Doors will open at 4:45 p.m. for a social hour followed by dinner. Tickets are $85 per person or $680 for a table of eight. They are available at St. Paul Cathedral, Holy Family Church and Christ The Teacher School or online at www.eckerfoundation.org.

All are welcome to come and honor Monsignor Ecker for his dedicated service to the Diocese of Yakima as well as his work as a U.S. Navy chaplain during the Vietnam War and beyond. It's also a great time to honor his 90th birthday which was on March 18 and his 65th anniversary of priesthood on February 3!



Monsignor John Ecker

A Message from Bishop Tyson…

Dear Friends:

As Lent gives way to Easter we have the chance to see our own journey of faith changing too! How are we growing? What needs to happen in the garden where God has planted us?

I was recently in a conversation about the Ahtanum Saint Joseph Mission near Yakima. Saplings from the original apple trees planted by Father Jean Charles Pandosy – one of the original missionaries here – are still standing. Volunteers had planted saplings a few years back. But now we realized the saplings were planted too close together. Generous volunteers with better knowledge of apples went in recently to respace and replant.

That is the dynamic of Lent to Easter. Lent often points to deeply rooted habits we may want God as the master gardener to tend and even to pull up. Prayer, fasting and almsgiving work to change our tendencies to grow crooked and inward. But even more, for Easter, we may discover that our life gets moved around in directions we don't expect. A health challenge, a new ministry, a different job, the birth of a child, the death of a loved one all can mean a kind of "respacing" to allow for new growth.

That's the story of God whose very face we see in Jesus – the Crucified and Risen One. Thinking He was deader than dead, having been tortured to death on the cross, the women came Easter morning to anoint His body.

Bishop Joseph Tyson

They already knew He was so dead that, unlike other men crucified, the soldiers did not bother to break His legs, conducting a kind of mercy killing that would have allowed Him to end His slow suffocation on the cross. The soldiers had already found Him to be dead on the cross.

This month's issue of the *Central Washington Catholic* not only touches on themes of Lent, but we have short notes about the special collections for Home Missions as well as the Holy Land. The Holy Land collection has its antecedents in the scriptural account of Saint Paul, himself, begging for money for the Church in Jerusalem. But Home Missions is about spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ here in the New World! Indeed, the Diocese of Yakima, still being considered "mission territory" by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, not only gives to the Home Missions collection, but we are recipients of grants from the collection, too!

The terrain is always rocky for the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The climate of disbelief so evident Easter Sunday still continues today. We may find it very difficult to deal with the rocky condition of our spiritual life. The climate of disbelief may seep into our families, our adult children and our closest friends. But our generosity with the collections as well as our generosity of time, treasure and talent in our local parishes does make a difference. It means that even if failure seems so evident in those closest to us, we always have the possibility of helping them and others around us, those we may not know all that well, so that their lives can be "re-spaced" for more growth and to become re-rooted in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, who is Our Lord and Savior.

Thanks for all you give and even more thanks for who you are as followers of His Easter message!

With every best wish and blessing!

Yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Joseph J. Tyson
Bishop of Yakima

Support the Holy Land

Pope Francis has asked Catholics throughout the world to support the Pontifical Good Friday Collection, which helps Christians in the Holy Land. Our support helps the Church minister in parishes, provide Catholic schools and offer religious education. The Pontifical Good Friday Collection also helps to preserve the sacred shrines.

The pandemic hit particularly hard the Christians in the Holy Land. Most of them depend on pilgrimages to work. In these times of crisis, the Pontifical Good Friday Collection is also necessary to meet the basic needs of the People of God still living in this Land where the Church was born.

When we contribute to the Pontifical Good Friday Collection, we become an instrument of peace and join with Catholics around the world in solidarity with the Church in the Holy Land. For more information about Christians in the Holy Land, visit www.myfranciscan.org/good-Friday. Please be generous!

A donations page should be available in early April at: https://bit.ly/395qg6F.

If you have been abused or victimized by a member of the Catholic clergy, please believe in the possibility for hope and help and healing. We encourage you to come forward and speak out.

The Yakima Diocese has a sexual abuse hotline for those who wish to report some incident concerning that issue as regards a bishop, priest, deacon or diocesan employee or volunteer. (888) 276-4490.

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Test Your Knowledge of the Catholic Faith With Easter Quiz

How well do you know your Catholic Faith? Try answering the nine multiple-choice questions that follow, concerning Lent and Easter. Answers are at the end.

1. The 40 days of Lent represent:
   a. Time Jesus spent in the desert
   b. The 40 years spent by the Israelites in the desert
   c. Forty days spent in prayer after Jesus' death

2. What was the original meaning of the term "Lent"?
   a. Spring
   b. Suffering
   c. Waiting

3. What word is not said or sung during Lent?
   a. Rejoice
   b. Gladness
   c. Alleluia

4. The Easter Triduum refers to:
   a. The three days following Easter
   b. Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday
   c. The last three Stations of the Cross

5. Which devotion is given a special place in Lent?
   a. Lighting of candles on a wreath
   b. Stations of the Cross
   c. Corpus Christi parades

6. The tomb for Jesus' burial was provided by:
   a. Mary and Martha
   b. St. Joseph, the father of Jesus
   c. Joseph of Arimathea

7. Jesus was crucified and died for what purpose?
   a. To become perfect, through penance for His sins
   b. For the sins of mankind
   c. It was just that He was wrongly accused

8. Jesus arose from the dead on which day of the week?
   a. The last day of the week
   b. The Sabbath
   c. The first day of the week

9. What is the 50-day period following Easter called?
   a. Eastertide
   b. Pentecost
   c. Advent

Quiz based on information from websites of Our Lady of Mercy Lay Carmelite Community, Catholic Online, Trivia Champ and Catholic Action Montreal.

Answers: 1. a) Time Jesus spent in the desert; 2. a) Spring; 3. c) Alleluia; 4. b) Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday; 5. b) Stations of the Cross; 6. c)) Joseph of Arimathea; 7. b) For the sins of mankind; 8. c) The first day of the week, according to Scripture; 9. a) Eastertide.

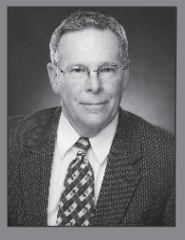
There Are Scientific and Historical Reasons To Believe In The Resurrection

Continued from page 1

claim that Jesus was resurrected," points out the the gospelcoalition.org. "Their lives would probably have been spared if they recanted. This is very significant. We know that people will die for a cause. But these men and women died for a set of facts…. They died because they said the facts of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus were true."

In all, there were **hundreds of people who saw Jesus after his Resurrection**. The website factsandfaith.com reminds us that in 1 Corinthians, Paul reports that Jesus "appeared to Peter, then the 12 disciples, then more than 500 brethren most of whom were still alive and could be questioned, James…(a previous skeptic) and finally to Paul himself (a Pharisee and man who had previously persecuted Christians until he had a face-to-face encounter with the resurrected Jesus)."

So, next time you feel the slightest doubt about the amazing Resurrection of Jesus Christ, know that our Catholic Faith, the science and the historical accounts all line up to give us a powerful reason to celebrate on Easter Day!



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NEWS
From Around the Diocese

Magnificat Synthesis Day Planned

The final gathering for the 2022-23 Magnificat series is set for Saturday, May 20. The topic for this "synthesis day" will be "Synod Update: Youth." Bishop Joseph Tyson and Fathers Jesus Mariscal and Edgar Quiroga will be the presenters.

The morning will begin with 10 a.m. Mass at St. Paul Cathedral, followed by the presentation at 11 a.m., and lunch and a raffle from noon to 1 p.m.

Please note that all other Magnificat sessions for April and May have been cancelled due to scheduling conflicts and to focus on the Spanish Congreso Católico de Evangelización Familiar that is scheduled for April 28-30 at the Yakima SunDome.

For more information, call Valeria Flores at (509) 965-7117 or email valeria.flores@yakimadiocese.org.

Support the Home Missions Appeal

Parishes throughout the United States will take up the Catholic Home Missions Appeal April 29-30 to assist our country's mission dioceses, including the Diocese of Yakima.

A program of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Catholic Home Missions is providing the Diocese of Yakima $140,000 this year for seminarian education, the Magnificat adult education program, and the annual Church Mission Congress for faith development. Additional grants of over $16,000 were awarded to help with local efforts for the National Eucharistic Revival, local celebrations of World Youth Day, and support for participation in the safe environment and victim assistance national meeting.

Nearly half of our country is considered home mission territory. This appeal helps dioceses in the United States which cannot always assure access to basic pastoral services such as Mass, the sacraments, and religious education.

Through your support, the Catholic Home Missions Appeal helps these mission dioceses form vibrant faith communities and strengthens the Church at home. Please be generous. A donations page will be available toward the end of April at: https://bit.ly/395qg6F.

Father John Shaw Enters Hospice Care

By Monsignor Robert Siler

For Father John Shaw, the eldest priest of the Diocese of Yakima, April 17, 1927 was a very important day in his life for two reasons: Not only was he born that day, but he was born on Easter Sunday. "What a tremendous honor to be born the day Jesus rose from the dead," he observed recently, while reflecting on the nearly 66 years of priesthood he shares with his slightly younger brother, Father William (Bill) Shaw.

Photo courtesy of Monsignor Robert Siler

Father John Shaw was struck with pneumonia in January. Beside him are his brothers, Bob (left) and Father Bill.

Whether Fr. John lives to celebrate his 96th birthday this year, or even Easter Sunday, on April 9, is an open question. Admitted to Memorial Hospital in Yakima in early January with pneumonia, he was near death for a time. Diagnosed with congestive heart failure, he found many of the treatments he was receiving to be more burdensome than the benefits he was receiving from them.

After consulting with his doctors, who confirmed with reasonable medical certainty that he was likely to die within six months, and discussing it with Fr. Bill and their slightly younger brother, Bob (all three in their 90s now), Fr. John made the decision to enter hospice care. After regaining some strength in the hospital, he was discharged to Hillcrest Assisted Living in Yakima, in the same senior housing complex where Fr. Bill and Bob both live.

At Hillcrest, he receives services from the staff as well as Heartlinks Hospice and Palliative Care. His brothers are close by and spend time with him daily. Bishop Joseph Tyson and priests and deacons of the Diocese visit regularly, along with many past parishioners and those with whom he worked in the Cursillo Movement, and the Native American Ministry in the Diocese. As he has gotten weaker, he has had to ask people to limit their visits. But he still finds time, with the help of the staff, to take a daily walk in the hallways, perhaps remembering the annual trips he and Fr. Bill would make to hike up Mount Adams.

Fr. John no longer takes all the medications he used to, focusing on those that help him be comfortable and manage pain and anxiety, so that he can focus on the important spiritual work of preparing for death as a faithful Catholic Christian. The health care decisions he makes are those which he judges still provide more benefits than the burdens they impose, consistent with the Church's teaching on end-of-life care. He has designated Fr. Bill as his health care power of attorney, so that if he reaches a point where he can no longer make his own decisions, Fr. Bill can do so for him, again in keeping with Church teaching.

Seen in this light, hospice is not about choosing to die sooner, but about recognizing that our lives are a gift from God, and that death ultimately is not the end, but rather the doorway to a return to the loving God who created us. That means learning to gradually and gracefully let go while continuing to receive ordinary means of care, such as food and water, that are obligatory for Catholics in most circumstances.

"I've lost my eyesight, my hearing, and now my memory," Fr. John said during a recent visit. And yet he is still able to recall the example of his father, John Matthew Shaw, who fought as a soldier in the First World War and was wounded by shrapnel. Recovering from his wounds, he and his wife Leonelda worked hard to make sure that their children were able to receive a Catholic education. Fr. John also remembers working at a Catholic cemetery to help pay his way through St. Edward Seminary in the Seattle Archdiocese.

When he is not resting or praying, Fr. John has been busy making funeral arrangements, including sharing memories of his life with Henry Strom, a member of the Yakama Tribe whom he has asked to speak in remembrance of him at his funeral Vigil.

Fr. John has had some restless nights, and also felt fear at times as the reality of dying has hit home. These are normal, natural human reactions. They also prompt him to renew his faith in the One who gave His life for us on the cross, our Lord Jesus, whom Fr. John firmly believes he will meet as a merciful judge when he dies.

We also are called to stir up the gift of Faith, and with the help of our continued prayers, to trust that when that moment occurs for Fr. John, he will hear Jesus say, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Let's keep all the senior priests of the Diocese of Yakima in our prayers, and be assured that they are praying for us, and are grateful for the generosity of our financial gifts that support their healthcare needs. To learn more about making decisions for end-of-life care, visit the Washington State Catholic Conference's website, www.wacatholics.org, or directly at this link: http://bit.ly/3ntqDSf.

The 24th Annual Hispanic Congreso Scheduled for Yakima

The Yakima Valley SunDome will be the setting for the 24th annual Catholic Hispanic Congreso of Family Evangelization, April 28-30. This is one of the largest events in the Pacific Northwest. This year, the Congreso will focus on the Holy Eucharist, launching a year of preparation for the National Eucharistic Revival in July 2024 in Indianapolis.

The event will open on Friday, April 28, with a concert of gospel music and a Mass of Healing. On Saturday, there will be more gospel music plus talks from guest speakers, closing with a Holy Hour. On Sunday, April 30, there will be a concluding Mass, celebrated by Bishop Joseph Tyson. Priests of the Diocese of Yakima will be hearing confessions at various times during the weekend. Bishop Tyson will be preaching in both English and Spanish both Friday night and Saturday.

Admission to the Congreso is free. For more details, call (509) 949-5921 or (509) 307-1299. The Congreso's Facebook page can be accessed at this link: bit.ly/3FV0Usx.