

By Donald Piscitelli

Before I begin; did anyone else start watching “The Chosen”?

As we are fast approaching the holiest season of the year with Lent set to begin this month, I thought I would share with you how I explained my belief with my nephew’s, when they asked me to be their confirmation sponsor, I was given a list of questions one of which was: “Tell me about an experience in your life when it was difficult for you to be Catholic, perhaps a time when you were ridiculed because of your faith or a time when you struggled to believe in the teachings of the Catholic faith. What did you do to keep your faith or find ‘answers to your questions during these times.” So, I chose the latter and explained why I really don’t struggle believing.

Not many people dispute the fact a man named Jesus existed or that he may have been crucified. The Roman Senator and historian Tacitus, a non-Christian, referred to Jesus and his execution by Pontius Pilate. In his writings he infers Nero blamed Christians for starting the fires that burned Rome in 64AD, because of their resentment of the execution. So I think this historically proves a man named Jesus existed and was crucified. Most of the dispute centers around the miracles he performed and his rising on the third day. Basically anything having to do with his divinity.

My belief in his divinity is based on what is written about the twelve Apostles deaths. The bible tells us Judas hung himself after betraying Jesus. It also documents James son of Zebedee (the greater) was martyred by Herod he was beheaded. So I’ll list the other 10 and the methods of their death:

1. Peter – crucified upside down by Nero in 64 AD.
2. John – poisoned and boiled in oil but survived, exiled to Patmos where he wrote the book of Revelation, died of old aged 98 AD.
3. Andrew – crucified on an X shaped cross in 60 AD.
4. Phillip – crucified 54 AD.
5. Bartholomew – beaten then crucified.
6. Matthew – Speared to death.
7. Thomas – speared to death 72 AD.
8. James son of Alphaeus – Stoned to death.
9. Jude Thaddeus – crucified 65 AD.
10. Simon – crucified 65 AD.

The bible tells us that after Jesus rose from the dead, the disciples saw, ate and talk with him multiple times. We’re also told they were also commanded not to teach or speak in the name of Jesus Acts 4:18. However, after the Ascension they went to different parts of the world to do just that. These disciples risked their lives to speak about what they had witnessed – that Jesus had risen from the dead, proving that he was everything he claimed to be, the Son of God.

That said, people lie because they are afraid of the consequences of telling the truth, think about those times when you may have told a lie.

So, as you now know all the disciples suffered torturous deaths probably after being beaten and/or whipped. All they had to do was renounce what they were preaching not to be put to death. As you can see none of them did, so you need to ask yourself why?

A few passages in the bible may give an idea why:

John 14: 2 - I go to prepare a place for you that we may be together.

Matthew 26: 29 - I won't share this again until in my Father's Kingdom.

Revelation 2: 7 - to whom that overcome I will give tree of life in Paradise.

Matthew 19:28 - When the Son of Man is seated on the throne of his glory, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

I believe that they knew something better waiting for them to endure the torture. I hope this helps you both get stronger in your faith.

Well that was basically what I gave them, hopefully maybe something here helps you with your Lenten journey this year.

As far as a reflection that can improve your life in the short term please reflect on this, what would your life be like if you forgot to get your significant other a present for Valentines day which is 12 days from today.

Vivat Jesus.