

Homily – May 4th, 2025 – 3rd Sunday of Easter



In the resurrection stories—and there's a lot of them--the Risen Jesus is never recognized straight out. Something has to happen, and then the people finally get it that it's the Risen

Jesus in their midst. I doubt I would have fared any better than those people did back in Biblical times. Underneath candle sticks, incense, fancy vestments and ornate church buildings, what people are hungering for today is the same thing they were hungering for 2000 years ago—an experience of Jesus, the Risen One.

From what I can figure out, a sign has to be given, a prompt you might say, that clues people into the fact that the Risen Jesus is in their midst. Here's three that I've come up with, although I'm sure there are more.

Firstly, when you are in the presence of the Risen One, Jesus, you sense you are in a world of abundance. What you were so sure was scarce, you're now overwhelmed with grace, with gratitude, with a sense that everything is going to turn out all right. In today's resurrection story, Jesus is on the shore cooking fish and toasting bread. The last time we hear about fish and bread is when Jesus fed the multitude. Apparently, he fed over 5000 people with just five loaves of bread and two fish. The four gospel writers must want to hammer home an

important point about Jesus because they mention the feeding of the multitude six times. Perhaps what they want to tell us is that Jesus never makes enough. He always gets carried away and makes too much. When we give from a place of Spirit within us, as Jesus always seems to do, things tend to multiply and become more. Why? Because the place of Spirit is a place of abundance. Think of the last time you gave from the place of Spirit within yourself, maybe you loved someone who wasn't all that deserving of your love. You didn't feel cheapened or lessened. In fact, you felt you had more love in you after you gave it away than before you gave it away. Giving, in that case, released abundance.

Another tipoff for the disciples in this story, concerning the world of abundance, is that their nets were full of fish. We are told their nets were filled with 153 large fish. Apparently, in Biblical times, the total number of known species of fish was 153. If fish are people, and if Jesus called his disciples to be fishers of people, then catching every known species of fish in the world means the Good News is for everyone. Jesus' message is for the whole world, not just Catholics, and not just for people we've decided are worthy of salvation. At the Second Vatican Council, the Church abandoned—for very good reason—this foolish nonsense that there was no salvation outside the Roman Catholic Church. Peter, by saying three times that he loved Jesus, was professing his love and not his allegiance, his duty, nor his blind obedience to Jesus. At the ordination of a new priest, better than being asked if he will profess obedience to the bishop and his successors, he should be asked, "Do you promise to love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your mind, and all your strength—and your neighbour as yourself?"

So, the first tipoff that we are in the presence of the Risen Lord is abundance. The second clue is that Jesus will ask something of us, something big, that we don't dare ask of each other. We ask little things of each other, maybe in the hopes of not being disappointed. We ask little, we expect little, and voila...we usually get little. Sometimes Jesus asks something of us that seems ridiculous or way beyond what we've convinced ourselves that we are capable of. My mind tells me that my resources are limited, and I better guard against getting burned out. But with God all things are possible. Why would Peter even consider listening to a stranger shouting from the shore to put his net out on the other side of the boat, especially since he was fishing all night long and caught nothing. Before he did so, Peter may have been thinking to himself, "Who is this guy who is asking me to do something that no one on the boat dares to even suggest?" Maybe Peter was thinking of a previous time when, on that same Sea of Tiberius, the Lord asked Peter to come to him by walking on the water. Nobody, in their right mind, ever dared to ask Peter to do such an impossible task as walking on water. Peter said, "If it's you Lord, ask me the impossible, ask me to come to you on the water." I think the Lord works the same way in your life and mine, asking us to embrace something we're convinced is impossible. While Jesus asks a lot of us, he also give us a lot. In fact, he gives us everything—his very Spirit. We never do anything alone.

Abundance, asking something daring of us—now, here comes the third clue that we are in the presence of the Risen One. He gets us to do the one thing he told us to do—to break bread and drink wine in his memory. In the story of the disciples on the road to Emmaus, the Risen Lord catches up with two forlorn disciples who think Jesus is dead. After inviting Jesus to "stay with us," Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. The very next line says that "their

eyes were opened.” They recognized him in the breaking of the bread. It’s almost a repeat in today’s story. When he invites the disciples to “***Come and have breakfast,***” it triggers within them that fateful night when he broke bread with them and said, “This is my body given for you.” That’s what we’re called to do also—to remember Jesus over bread that is broken and wine that is poured out. Never walk by the bread or the wine. If we do so, we run the risk of forgetting. We run the risk of not recognizing the presence of the Risen One in our midst.

Abundance, somebody asking something of us that no one else dares to ask, and a person who keeps inviting us over and over again to a meal. Look for those signs, and you’ll be convinced you are in the presence of one who feeds you. And the One who feeds you will now say to you, “Now you do it. Feed my sheep. Feed my lambs.”

~Fr. Phil