

My Brothers and Sisters,

Today's Gospel recounts the third post-resurrection appearance of Jesus. As we read the stories of Jesus' post-resurrection appearances, we might ask ourselves why they were included in the Gospels in the form they were. I think they were attempts by the Evangelists to give us insight into Jesus' resurrection and perhaps to answer some of our questions or even doubts about his resurrection.

Most of us have had experiences that we cannot fully capture in words. I think these Gospel stories were the Evangelists' attempts to convey both the mystery and the reality of the Risen Christ.

In today's Gospel, as in his other post-resurrection appearances, his disciples initially did not realize it was Jesus. In this story, they only recognized Jesus after they caught the one hundred fifty-three large fish. The initial non-recognition followed by recognition was their way of telling us that Christ really had risen in his body, but his body had been transformed. To affirm the physical reality of the resurrection more forcefully, today's Gospel portrays Jesus cooking and serving breakfast. Another story has Jesus asking for food. The point was that Jesus had truly risen in his body.

To better understand the resurrection of Jesus, we can contrast it with Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. Although he had been dead three days, we might better term the raising of Lazarus a resuscitation rather than a resurrection. In other words, he returned to the life he previously had, which meant he would grow old, get sick, and eventually die again. Jesus, on the other hand, rose glorious, triumphant, and immortal, never to die again.

In the stories of Jesus' post-resurrection appearances, the Evangelists were trying to explain the unexplainable. They were trying to say that Jesus really rose from the dead and that he was the same yet different. On a more practical level, it is important to note that the disciples only recognized Jesus after they caught the fish. In other words, since they had caught no fish the night before, they recognized Jesus in his goodness or gift to them. The message for us is that when we do good for others, they can recognize the Lord Jesus in us. They can recognize his presence, power, and activity in their lives through us. We become channels of his grace, his goodness, and his gifts.

The other two readings also offer practical applications to our lives. When the apostles were brought into the high priest who accused them of continuing to teach in the name of Jesus after they had been ordered not to, they responded, "*We must obey God rather than men.*" We are blessed to live in a country that guarantees freedom of religion constitutionally. At the same time, recently that freedom has been challenged in various ways both by government entities and by various other groups. However, I do not think our ability to obey God is challenged as much by laws and policies as by our culture. Surveys and studies consistently show that we are allowing our secular culture to shape our beliefs and values more than the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

My brothers and sisters, today's reading from Revelation gives us a glimpse of the heavenly Liturgy. This reading, then, reminds us of the importance of our earthly Eucharistic Liturgy. When we celebrate Eucharist, we anticipate the heavenly banquet, the heavenly Liturgy.