

## Second Sunday of Easter A May 1, 2011 – Fr. Gerald Haemmerle

Today is a busy Sunday in the Catholic Church. It is divine Mercy Sunday, there are many Catholics who have a special devotion to the divine mercy. In Rome, Pope John Paul II is being beatified. It was the pope for so many years, and was admired by so many in the world. Here at St. Charles we are celebrating First Communion Sunday for many of our children, which makes it very special. And we are all reminded of the importance and centrality of the Eucharist in our lives.

All week long we have been reading the accounts of the resurrection appearances of Jesus to the disciples. All of them record that Jesus first appeared to Mary Magdalene. There was a special bond, a special love between them.

But let's look at the other appearances. He walks along with two of the disciples on the way to Emmaus, he opens their minds to understand the scriptures, and then he goes in to have dinner with them, and he breaks bread with them. A sure sign of the Eucharist. Their eyes are opened, and they recognize the lord.

In another appearance he visits all the apostles in the upper room, he asks for some food and he eats with them. In another account, he appears to some of them on the sea of Galilee, he helps them make a wonderful catch of fish, he explains the scriptures to them and he shares food with them. In all the appearances Jesus shares food with them, he breaks bread with them. There is a close connection between the resurrection and the Eucharist.

In our gospel today, Jesus appears to the disciples and says "Peace be with you," and shows them his hands and his feet. They come to believe that it is the lord. Thomas was absent, and when told of Jesus' appearance, said he would never believe that unless he sees and touches the lord himself. And the next Sunday Jesus appears again, and invites Thomas, the doubter, to come and touch him, to put his fingers into his wounds and hand into his side. And Thomas, the doubter, utters the most profound and beautiful profession of faith, he said, "My lord and my God."

At the first communion mass today I told the children a number of things. How is the lord present in the bread, the Eucharist? I have no idea how that is possible, but I believe it because Jesus said "This is my body, this is the cup of my blood", I believe it because the church has always taught it. And I told the children that the greatest thing about the Eucharist is that it is not a one time thing, that we can receive our lord in the Eucharist every Sunday for the rest of our lives. Gene Torchia, the head usher at this mass for many years, a man 85 years old, died this morning. How ready he was to meet the lord, for he has faithfully come to mass and shared in the Eucharist every Sunday all those 85 years. How grateful we should all be that the lord offers us this great gift every Sunday. How can we ever refuse that invitation? And our response should be that of Thomas as we bow before Jesus in the Eucharist, My Lord and my God.