

3rd Sunday of Easter A May 8, 2011 – Fr. Gerald Haemmerle

For the past two weeks we have been reading about the Resurrection and the appearances of Jesus to some of his disciples in both the Acts of the Apostles and the gospels. All four of the gospels testify to the fact that Jesus first appeared to Mary Magdalene. There was certainly a special relationship between them.

In one of the appearances he visits all of the apostles in the upper room, and 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 scriptures to them and he shares food with them.

Today's account is perhaps the most beautiful of them all. Two of his disciples are journeying away from Jerusalem toward Emmaus, terribly disappointed at all that has happened the past few days. Jesus joins them, but they do not recognize him, he is like a stranger to them. They tell him all that has happened, and Jesus then begins to explain to them all the scriptures that relate to him. They slowly begin to understand. When they reach their destination for the night, they say to Jesus, "Stay with us." He did. And as they were at table together, Jesus took bread, said the blessing, broke it and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized Jesus.

What are we doing here today? We have gathered of course to celebrate mass, as we do every week. And we do exactly what Jesus did in all of these resurrection accounts, especially in the one we read today. We listen to the scriptures and try to open them up or understand them. What are they telling us about God, what are they telling us about ourselves and our lives? The great privilege of the priest is to try to help people do that. And then we break bread, we share the Eucharist with one another, we truly become one with the living lord.

Last evening we had the last of our First Communions for this year. I asked the children how the lord can be present in the Eucharist, in the bread and the wine? I then told them that I had 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. I told the children that the most beautiful thing about the Eucharist is that Jesus did not give us this wonderful gift only once, at the Last Supper or at our First Communion, but he offers up this gift every Sunday of the year. If we truly believe that, how could we ever miss it.

Last Wednesday I made a journey to Ft. Recovery to celebrate the funeral mass of Gene Torchia, a long time and wonderful parishioner. He was head of the building and maintenance committee for many years, and an usher here at a later mass. He never missed mass, he was well nourished by the Eucharist. This Wednesday I will return to Ft. Recovery to bury his wife Rosemary. She too was most faithful at Sunday mass. They were married for 57 years, it was a wonderful journey, and the Lord walked that journey with them each step of the way.

In the gospel today the two disciples said to Jesus, "Stay with us." That should be our prayer. Our lord stays with us for our journey through life, and the most beautiful way is in the Eucharist. May we always cherish it.