

3rd Sunday of Easter
April 9 & 10, 2016

Fr. Andy Szebenyi, SJ
All Saints Parish, Syr., NY

My Dear Brothers and Sisters. In this homily for the third Sunday after Easter, I would like to share with you a bit of scriptural mystery. It is very curious, and at the same time very consistent that the disciples and the women who have been with Jesus for years before his death on the cross, listened to his teaching, shared meals with him in an intimate friendship, and so he became part of their everyday life, DID NOT RECOGNIZE HIM, when they saw him after his resurrection from the dead. What was needed was a special word or sign, or event, and then they recognized him. This special word or sign or event was like a key that opened the door to a world of faith.

Think for a moment what happened to Mary of Magdala. She was the first to see Jesus after his resurrection. She was at his tomb weeping as she was filled with deep hurt and sorrow over the death of Jesus. On top of all this, she could not find Jesus body, the tomb was empty. But Jesus was standing right there, and she thought that that person standing there was the gardener. That was what she saw up to that moment when Jesus called her by her name, 'Mary'. That was the key that opened, her eyes and she recognized Jesus and said, 'Teacher'.

A very same thing happened to two of Jesus disciples going to Emmaus, close to Jerusalem, after three days that Jesus died on the cross. They were sad and downcast because they saw in Jesus' death that their hope has been shattered. And as they walked, Jesus joined them, but they did not recognize him. And then Jesus explained to them the Scriptures about his death and resurrection, and the fulfillment of all the prophecies that the Redeemer was promised to come and to die on the cross for the people. Even after all this, they still did not recognize him until they were at table and Jesus took bread and broke it and gave it to them. Here was the key, the sign of the 'breaking of the bread.' This key opened their eyes, and they recognized Jesus, but he vanished from their sight.

My Sisters and Brothers, in today's Gospel we heard about the miraculous catch of fish as the key event through which the disciples recognized Jesus after his resurrection. As we read in the Gospel of John, 'This was now the third time Jesus was revealed to his disciples after being raised from the dead.' They were fishermen, and after an all night fishing with no results, in the first light of the morning, they saw someone standing on the shore, just about a hundred yards from them, who said to them, 'Cast out your net on the right side of the boat, and you will find something. They did so and caught 153 large fish. This event was the key of recognition, so John said to Peter, 'It is the Lord.'

My dear Brothers and Sisters, we come to the church of All Saints because we are called by name. Here we listen to the Word of God and witness the breaking of the bread. And we experience God's presence in our lives in many ways. Let us pray for, accept and cherish the gift of faith that opens our eyes and we recognize the risen Jesus here among us in the mystery of the Eucharist. It is Jesus who says the words, 'This is my Body,' and 'This is my Blood.' Our response is then the recognition that we are in the risen Jesus' loving and merciful presence. Our response is then gratitude and a deep sense of security and peace that no one can take from us. Amen.