

April 14 ASC EASTER 3 GGW

Last week, Mother Sandra told us the all very familiar story of Thomas: doubting Thomas. All of us probably have had moments of doubt when it comes to our understanding and faith in Jesus. It is an amazing and fantastic message that he has been raised from the dead.

Thomas would not believe unless he was able to put his finger into the wounds in Jesus' hands and side. We might wish that we too could have that experience to be absolutely sure about the resurrection but that can not happen for us.

This week we are told of two more reactions to the fact of the risen Lord by those who lived with him; by those who prayed with him; and by those who ate with him. For us it seems strange that those who spent so much time with Jesus during

his ministry were so unable to recognize the risen Lord. For us we are required to believe largely based upon the words of others to include the apostles, the church fathers, and others through the centuries who have found Christ. And more than just recognizing Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah, we are at the same time called into action: we are called to be disciples which can be very hard indeed.

Many believe that the original Gospel of John ended with the Thomas' story. It seems that some thought that Jesus' appearances to the disciples were fantasies or visions and NOT real. Perhaps it was a bit of wishful thinking and what was the meaning of it all. What should they do?

For those of us who went off to college or the military service do you remember what it was like to come home? For some of us who had younger

siblings I would imagine that our rooms had been taken over by them or perhaps your bedroom became an office for a parent or a sewing room for your mother.

The stories we had been told about not being able to go home was true: you can't go home because you have changed when you were gone and so have the people at home. When I came home after college and my army days, I found my home to be less than hospitable probably more because I was a different person than because the family had changed. As much as I tried to resume my old life, it was impossible to do that.

First, what do today's gospel story tell us about the recognition issue? My guess is that in a similar fashion, the disciples look at each other after the resurrection and before the day of

Pentecost and they wonder, "Now what?" So what they did was try to return to their old lives—they went back to the sea to do some fishing. As it turned out they had apparently lost some of the skills that they once possessed and were unable to catch any fish. It seems that they were called by Jesus to be fishers of men and not fishers of fish so their lives were now different.

Three years earlier, they had been called by Jesus with the summons to "follow me." And here again Jesus tells them how to throw the nets to catch fish and again to "follow me." This is the third time Jesus has appeared to them and although none immediately recognized Jesus they did follow his directions and caught a great number of fish.

As they were pulling in the net, John the beloved, yells, "It's the Lord." Perhaps John had better eyesight than the others but when he made his announcement Peter put on clothes and jumped into the water and makes his way to Jesus. John responds by his intellect and Peter responds impulsively by jumping in the water and making his way to the shore. Peter is the only one who jumps into the water while the others remain in the boat and go ashore in the boat.

Jesus wants all of these people to be his disciples. He wants the impulsive followers like Peter; he wants the deliberate or disciplined followers like John; and the pragmatic people like Thomas to be his followers. All of them and all of us no matter how we approach Jesus are welcomed into his fellowship.

Here in this meeting, Jesus has prepared a breakfast for all of them. This is significant because one cannot imagine a fantasy or a vision to make a fire and serve a breakfast. This was a very real person.

Jesus is calling them to be followers once again as he had done three years earlier. Three years earlier they had followed him almost blindly but now they knew Jesus to be a healer, a person willing to eat with sinners, a miracle worker, and a person who died a humiliating death on the cross. And when his followers forgot him in his hour of need, he returned, broke bread, forgave them, and called them once again to follow him.

This seems to be for the disciples like a bookend: another chance meeting by the sea and an appeal to be a follower.

This also is message for us and an invitation to all of us.

Once we are transformed by God and become followers of Christ, we cannot go back to the way things used to be. We have been changed and all of our relationships will change also.

Discipleship is not easy.

Different churches bring people into the life of the church in different ways. Some churches, like here at All Saint's Church, make it easy: all one must do is make a commitment to God and the congregation on a Sunday morning.

Some churches require a series of classes before people are allowed to join. In the early history of

the church becoming a member was a three year process which included much study and prayer.

Discipleship is different than church membership. It is possible to be a church member without really following the teaching of Jesus. There are some churches which act more like country clubs than houses of worship. Discipleship demands more than attendance: answering the call of God is life changing—and sometimes even dangerous.

We must remember that all of the Apostles suffered humiliating deaths because of their belief. We too are called to be willing to sacrifice and suffer for our belief if necessary. Amen.