

HOMILY 3RD SUNDAY OF EASTER
April 18, 2021

During COVID it has become very clear to me that food is always an important part of our social interactions. I think that has been part of the problem with the spread of the virus. When people get together, the food comes out, the masks come off and the virus spreads. It is almost unthinkable to have social interactions without food. It is not the food itself. For example, I have gotten carryout during the pandemic. If I got it by myself, I felt good about supporting the restaurant industry and I did not have to cook that day, but that was it. If I get carry out now and share a meal with friends or family that are fully vaccinated, I really enjoy it and find the whole experience satisfying. If I was sharing a meal with others, it did not even matter if the food was particularly good. What makes the meal enjoyable and satisfying is that it is combined with the love and support I get from family and friends. So I think we need both.

In the Gospel reading, we heard another account of a post Resurrection appearance of Jesus. One of the things that I have noticed about the post Resurrection appearances is that Jesus generally did not appear to people when they were alone. Jesus was always bringing people together. The purpose of the post Resurrection appearances is that people would know that Jesus is alive and with them spiritually. So I think he appeared to them when they were in groups so they could love and support each other in faith through all of this. As soon as he knew that they understood this and understood that the scriptures were fulfilled with his death and Resurrection, the appearances stopped and Jesus ascended into heaven. He remains with us now spiritually. The beginning of the Gospel reading today makes reference to the disciples

on the road to Emmaus. He appeared to more than one person, and they did not recognize him until the breaking of the bread. Out comes the food and they shared a meal. In this appearance account in the Gospel, the disciples are in a group, and they did not know what to make of the experience until they brought out the food. Jesus ate the fish with his disciples. There is something very important about food and fellowship. We must have both.

I think Jesus was brilliant when he instated the Eucharist. This automatically combines food and fellowship. Both are important at each Mass that we celebrate. Every time we gather to celebrate the Eucharist, I think our faith is strengthened. We are with a whole congregation of believers and that strengthens our faith. We know that we are part of something bigger than ourselves. I learned through COVID that all of you strengthen my faith. I missed all of you when we were not having public Masses. I think when we are isolated, we start questioning our faith. We need the community. And we also receive the Eucharist, physical and spiritual food for the week. We get both every time we celebrate Mass. When we were not having public Masses, Archbishop Vigneron asked the priests to celebrate a private Mass each day. I did that and received the Eucharist, but it was not particularly spiritually nourishing. I have talked to some individuals who are homebound and receiving the Eucharist at home; and they tell me that it is good, but they wish they could come to Mass. People who are Eucharistic Home Visitors know that distributing the Eucharist is only part of their ministry. They need to also pray and interact with the people they are visiting.

I have talked to a number of people who are worried that people are too used to watching the streamed Mass and will not come back to Church. I am not worried about that at all. Watching the Mass at home is better than nothing, but you do not get the contact with the

congregation and you do not receive the Eucharist. You do not get either one. We need to be part of a Catholic Community so that we can be witnesses for Jesus Christ. Jesus gave the disciples that commission 2,000 years ago, and he is giving us the same commission today. We need to come together to celebrate Mass each weekend, and we need to love and support one another outside of Mass as well. Several people suggested that we give out donuts in a baggie after Mass. Well, I guess some people really like the donuts, but you could just as easily stop at the bakery on the way home. The donuts do not take the place of staying for coffee and donuts after Mass. We need both, interacting with others and food. We are starting to get back to normal, but we still have a way to go. We will not be satisfied until we have both, food and fellowship.