



ALL SAINTS' CHURCH

THIS SUNDAY May 5 & BEYOND”

"Don't Lose the Risen Christ in the Midst"



There are quite a few fish stories in the Bible. I don't mean the kind of fish stories that you hear fishermen or fisherwomen tell other fisherfolk, as in "you should have seen the one that got away!"

I mean the stories that are about fish or include fish in the ministry, the miracles, the teachings of Jesus, and those of the disciples (and other places in the bible). Fish is a daily staple of the diet, and the economy for Jesus and all those living at that time in Israel (and many other places around water). It is no surprise, then, to hear Jesus teach or show God's power focused on familiar items like fish. Like the miracle story of a fish being caught by Peter at the Lord Jesus' behest while teaching about paying temple tax and Roman tax, and lo and behold, a large value coin is found in the fish's mouth, enough to pay two people's tax.

Of course, there is the comment made by Jesus, "follow me, and I will teach you to be fishers of men!"

And then there are the amazing catches of fish by nets from the disciples' fishing business boats. One of those is in Luke. The other is in John, and it is after the Resurrection. So we are right in the middle of a story being told by John about the resurrected Jesus appearing to the Apostles, and in the telling of that is how Jesus – unrecognized at that moment – tells Peter and seven of the apostles who have been working unsuccessfully at fishing with nets to throw the nets on the other side of the boat. And they almost immediately gain a HUGE haul, which they then are going to have to process.

All of this happens at once—the net fills up with fish to overloading it, Jesus now has been recognized on the shore somehow by the young apostle, John, who is also part of the fishing party, and tells Peter, and Peter jumps in the water to swim to shore.

Then comes the processing of the fish, and a count is given: 153, and, said with amazement, the net was not torn!!

Lots of people think numerologically. And with this number being intentionally added to the detail of the excitement of the story, you know there will be attempts to come up with various numerological interpretations of the number 153. There are also various numerological METHODS, which allow for several different interpretations from a same passage of the scripture.

Of course, each of the words in the Bible, both Greek and Hebrew, adds up to a number. It is no wonder that of these over 10,000 words (most with several different tenses/forms), one can use arithmetic to derive one word/number from other words/numbers as one sees fit, and read meanings into it.

To illustrate this point, here are a variety of some numerological interpretations of 153:

- St. Jerome claimed there were 153 species of fish, thus the catch became a symbol of a fruitful mission as fishers of men.
- John A. Emerton notes that the streams of living water flowing from the temple in Ezekiel 47:9-10, will have fishermen standing along the shore, from En Gedi to En Eglaim. "Gedi" has the numerical value 17, and "Eglaim" has the numerical value 153, and $153 = 1+2+3+4+\dots+17$. Thus the number represents all the fishermen. (*Emerton was Cambridge's Regius Professor of Hebrew from 1968 – 2015*)
- St. Augustine of Hippo also noted that $153 = 1+2+3+4+\dots+17$. $17=10+7$, which is the ten commandments + the seven spirits of God.
- St. Gregory the Great reaches 17 the same way, but multiplies it by 3, the number of the trinity, to get 51, and by 3 again, unto perfection, to get 153.
- Others break 7 further down into $4+3$, the number of walls in the new Jerusalem + the trinity
- Yet others observe that 17 is the number of loaves of bread in the feeding of the 5000 + the number of baskets picked up after ($=12+5$).
- Others note that 153 is the numerical value of the phrase "The church of love" or "the children of God" or "Cana G" (+ "Cana in Galilee").
- Some see the number made up of "Simeon, Bar, Jonah, Kephas" (as in Cephas, Peter).

- Still other numerologists find 153 to be a reference to ICTHYS (a common early Christian acronym, standing for "Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior").

Is there a conclusion to all this arithmetic?

As Donald Carson (Trinity Evangelical Seminary), who wrote his commentary on the Gospel of John (1990) observes, without losing any of his deep respect for and high regard for the inspiration of the Word of God,

"Large quantities of ink have gone into explaining why there should be 153 fish. At the purely historical level, it is unsurprising that someone counted them, either as part of dividing them up amongst the fishermen in preparation for sale, or because one of the men was so dumbfounded by the size of the catch that he said something like this:

'Can you believe it? I wonder how many there are?'

Spoken like a true fisherman. That's where I am on that, too, even though I love to see patterns of numbers and letters in the books of the Bible.

One thing in all this excitement and numerology on the fish cannot be lost – and it is getting close now—Jesus is standing on the shore, showing himself to be resurrected, ALIVE, and he will EAT with those disciples. This is not a ghost. This is not a mirage. This is not an apparition. It is Jesus in his resurrected body, able to eat, sit, COOK, talk, listen, watch, and know where all the fish are.

When you get wound up by the excitements and the vicissitudes of life (isn't that a great word, vicissitude? – it means, basically, the difficult changes of life), Jesus is still in the midst of your story, your life. He will prepare a meal for you of provision and nurture, of satisfaction and connection. And He will invite you to sit with him and eat together.

This is the risen Jesus. Be in awe and give praise and thanks for his mighty works. And then sit with him and appreciate him, and receive his resurrected life from him.

Alleluia. Christ is Risen.

Fr. Robert G. Eaton, Interim Rector

Readings for this Sunday – The Second Sunday after Easter

Acts 9:1-19a Psalm 33:1-11 Revelation 5:6-14 John 21:1-14

CALENDAR

SUNDAY: **The Third Sunday after Easter**

8:30a Low Mass (Church)

10:30a Solemn Mass (Church)

—The entrance to the church is on 6th Avenue—

Note: Coffee Hour & Fellowship follow the Mass in the Parish Hall.

TUESDAY: Noon Mass (St. Mary's Chapel)

FRIDAY

AA Meetings

8:00p Ladies' Group (Fireside Room)

8:15p Men's Group (Parish Hall)

SUNDAY

Fourth Sunday after Easter

8:00am Low Mass

10:30am Solemn Mass