

Wednesday May 3, 2006
7:00am Holy Communion
Homily on Luke 24:36-48 by Rev Timothy A Leitzke

One might be tempted to wonder at the importance of fish in the Gospels. Jesus calls people to fish for people. Jesus feeds 5,000 with five loaves of bread and two fish. Jesus appears at the end of John and insists on giving the disciples a fish fry for breakfast. In Luke he appears and demands some broiled fish. If any of you decides to write a bestselling novel about this, something like *The Fish Code*, please cut me in on the profits.

Also bear in mind that this really is not something mystical and mysterious. Jesus called fishermen to follow him, so he used the fishing analogy. People ate fish, so it was a standard food. The fact that Jesus was *eating* fish is important in today's Gospel reading. Before that, though, he invites the disciples to gawk at his hands and feet. There's more afoot here than meets the casual eye. Jesus wants to prove to the disciples that he is not a ghost or a witch.

People have all sorts of ideas about witches. They eat children. They have carnal relations with Satan. Prevalent first century theories on witchcraft included the notions that

witches had gnarled hands, that their feet couldn't touch the ground, and that they could not eat food.

Christ invites the disciples to see his hands. Apparently they aren't gnarly and look like the hands of a human being. Christ invites the disciples to see his feet; they touch the ground. Christ invites the disciples to "handle" him, to feel that he is flesh and bone and not an apparition. Finally, he asks for food. They, being fishermen and living along the Mediterranean Sea, of course have fish, so they give him some. He eats it. It's almost a theological freak show, as the risen Christ performs the necessary gags, or a magician proving that there were no hoses attached to the empty hat that we just saw having milk poured into it. So we have our confirmation that Jesus the Christ is a human and not a witch.

Everything is at stake in this moment, comical, trivial, or bizarre as it may seem. Christ is making his case for the nature of resurrection. He is not a ghost. He is not a vaporous reproduction of himself, floating about Jerusalem and looking to scare small children on Halloween. Jesus died. We all saw it happen. There were a lot of people watching. They took his body down from the cross and put it in a tomb and sealed it. Jesus did not survive his execution. He was as dead as dead can be. He did not float up into the sky. His soul did not go to

heaven. On the third day, God raised him from death. God gave Jesus a new body. The Gospels tell us that people didn't recognize him at first. He didn't look quite the same. He was different. He was new and improved. He was immortal. God gave him a resurrection body.

Friends of Christ, the promise in Christ's resurrection is that we will be resurrected. It's not that our souls will spring from purgatory. It's not that we'll live on clouds. It's much, much better than that. We get our bodies back, only this time they are perfect. As my seminary professor, Dr. Christianson, used to say, "The next time you see this, it's going to look like Robert Redford." Friends of Christ, we get life the way God intended it to be. We get the life that Adam and Eve lost because of Sin. We get the world in which the lion and the lamb lie down together. We get the endless feast of victory for our God.

Today we get a foretaste of it in bread and wine and worship, but in the resurrection the feast is far greater. It's not metaphorical or metaphysical. It's real, with real wine and real bread, and yes probably some real fish, too, and at this feast we won't exclaim, "He is risen", but, "We are risen"! Amen