

**3rd Sunday of Easter**  
**Homily by Deacon Jim Olshefski**  
**May 5, 2019**

RED LETTER DAYS: We each experience a number of "red letter days" in our lives; days that are memorable, which are deep-rooted in our consciousness for the rest of our lives, whether we know the exact date or not. "Red letter days" in my life have been:

- That day long ago when the training wheels came off of my bike.
- The day when Mary and I were married; that date I do remember! (June 18)
- The days our children were born. (June 14, June 22 and July 17)
- And the most recent "red letter day" of my life: The day that I received my Medicare card, which officially welcomed me into the ranks of the "seasoned citizens!"

There's a tale of a contemporary of mine, a "seasoned citizen" named Marion, who had a particularly memorable "red letter day" when she had a major heart attack. While in the emergency room, Marion had a "near death experience" in which she came face-to-face with Jesus and asked if this was "the end" for her. Jesus replied, "No," and He told her that she had another 30 years to live!

Upon recovery from heart surgery, Marion rationalized that if she had another 30 years to live, she might as well invest in herself, stay in the hospital and have a face-lift, liposuction, and tummy-tuck: The works!

The day the "new Marion" was released from the medical center, she walked out the front door of the hospital and... was immediately struck and killed by an out-of-control delivery van! When she arrived at the pearly gates, she protested to Jesus, "I thought you said that I had another 30 years left?" To which Jesus responded, "Sorry, Marion, **I didn't recognize you!**"

In today's Gospel reading, Peter and the other disciples, who were unsuccessfully fishing in the Sea of Tiberius, **didn't recognize** the resurrected Jesus standing on the shore. That inability to initially recognize the resurrected Jesus wasn't an uncommon experience for the disciples: We see similar occurrences by Mary Magdalene at the tomb and the disciples on the road to Emmaus; in both instances, those who met the resurrected Jesus did not immediately recognize him. There are a number of competing theological arguments as to why Jesus was not immediately recognizable in these accounts from the Gospels; but, of more immediate import to us, is the question of whether we **recognize Jesus in those we meet in our daily lives**. While it's relatively easy to see God in others when life is going well, what about the times when life's road is not so smooth. What about when you face:

- Challenging times with your spouse, whom you promised to love and honor in good times and in bad

- The crying child who cannot be comforted
- Co-workers, who are difficult and annoying.

Also, in today's Gospel, Jesus displays his infinite **love and mercy** through his threefold questioning of Peter's love for Him. Peter's threefold response, "You know that I love you" counteracts the threefold denial of Jesus by Peter during the Passion, after which Peter wept bitterly. Through this dialogue and as we heard in the responsorial psalm, Jesus brings Peter out of his "night of weeping" into "the dawn of rejoicing," changing Peter's "mourning into dancing." Jesus, through his infinite love and mercy, thus restores Peter as the Rock upon which His church is built as we heard in the first reading when Peter boldly leads the Apostles before the Sanhedrin.

**LOVE and MERCY:** Just as Jesus displayed love and mercy to Peter, so we too are charged to show love and mercy to all of our brothers and sisters through Jesus' new commandment to "Love one another." (John 13:34)

So, in addition to asking ourselves whether we recognize Jesus in those we meet throughout our lives, we must also ask: Do I love and show mercy to my brothers and sisters, so that, unlike Marion, when my time comes Jesus will recognize me?