

Fr. John Sassani
Homily Given on April 22, 2012
3rd Sunday of Easter
Liturgical Year B

I have several dear friends, priests and others. Four of my very dearest friends are two married couples. Of the things we like to do together, head of the list is to go out to eat Italian. Recently we went to a small place they had found in East Boston. It's the only place I've had calamari "meatballs" as an appetizer. I know they are shellfish, but the restaurant serves them as a "shellfish ball" in a red sauce – fabulous!

The meal isn't just about the food. If it were only about the food, we would do take out. It's also about the fellowship. The staff see us often enough and know us well enough to offer or suggest some new dish. We know the owners as well and, every once in a while, they really advocate for a new recipe. Because they know us, they know what we really want.

Not only do the owners advocate for one dish or another – we find, in the conversation, that we advocate for things too – a political candidate, a vacation destination, the type of car to buy, where we should go next week for dinner. A lot happens at the table on these evenings that has taken our friendship and developed it.

I think Jesus was Italian. He loved meals with friends and neighbors where He advocated for various things. In the Gospels, Jesus' last supper after the Resurrection and before the Ascension was with the disciples at Emmaus. Later, He came to those gathered in the Upper Room, saying, "Peace be with you" and showing His wounds, and again He has something to eat. He then advocates for them to be His witnesses. Having heard Jesus reveal what He is about – love God above all things, love your neighbor unselfishly, everyone is your neighbor even your enemy – they now hear His call, "Be My witnesses!"

The same is true in a more profound way for ourselves and Jesus. That meal and this Eucharistic meal are connected. Christ is here – every week, every day – to be with us, to share His priorities with us, to empower us by this meal to be His advocates in the world. You have heard the quote from St. Francis: "Preach the Gospel always. Use words if necessary." There is another quote from St. Catherine of Siena: "Preach the Gospel with a thousand voices or the world will die of silence." These are not dueling saints! They both address advocates, because advocates speak and act in sync.

As we come to the Eucharist, Christ calls us to eat with Him to help us hear His priorities, to empower us to act upon them, and to call others to do the same. Because of our witness, the world can benefit and act upon these same priorities, which is how the peace of God's Kingdom comes into the world.