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“Children, have you caught anything?” (John 21:5).

Acts 4:1-12; John 21:1-14

Film buffs will know this bit of trivia, that director Alfred Hitchcock appears briefly in each of his films, often disguised, in the background, slightly out of focus, but always

there. Today's scene from the fourth Gospel has that look and feel to it.

Peter and six of the Apostles have gone back to Galilee and to their old profession as fishermen. They spend the night on the lake but catch nothing. Early next morning, a stranger on the shore calls to them to ask if they have caught anything. He calls them "children" and tells them they have been fishing on the wrong side of the boat. It is a ludicrous suggestion, but when they drop the nets again a huge catch almost sinks the boat.

There ensues one of the most endearing moments in the Gospels as Peter puts his clothes on to jump into the water and the others, including the mysterious "disciple whom Jesus loved," bring the boat and the nets thrashing with large fish to shore, where the stranger is cooking breakfast for them over a charcoal fire like the one in the courtyard Pete warmed himself by the night he denied knowing Jesus.

The story has been endlessly mined for the many allusions and themes hidden in its verses that take us back into the life of Jesus with his Apostles during their ministry. We realize that in their longing to see Jesus again they have been reliving those moments he was with them, and they are finding him again for the first time.

When we arrive in heaven and meet Jesus, our first reaction may be, "Hey, I know you. You've been showing up all my life, but I never really noticed you." We keep hoping to see Jesus in the future or in some miraculous way, when the truth is that he has always been there. We find him by remembering how he has loved, comforted and guided us through the ordinary challenges of life. In our greatest joys, he has been there to celebrate with us. In our darkest hour, he has been the first light of dawn that reassured us that things would get better. He has even humored us when we got so serious we stopped living, though we just needed to fish on the other side to catch our dream.

Jesus gave us the Eucharist and our fellowship to remember him, and when we do this he is always there, in the Scriptures, at the table, in one another and in the mission to catch the world for God. This is the joy of the Gospel and the meaning of Easter.

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