

Homily – Third Sunday in Easter
May 5, 2019
Year C John 21: 1-19
----Father Michael Grant George Cadotte----

To go through an event or some ‘thing’ that is larger than you can be life altering but when said event is done, over, and finished what next? The aftermath, as it were, of life after such a situation can be, at least for the initial moments after, tenuous.

I recall to mind, the time I spent living in a tent city just outside of New Orleans in the St. Bernard Parish. Working with hundreds of others staffing the clothing tent, home needs tent, communication tent and the large dining tent that could accommodate hundreds of dinners at a time. Duties of cooking, serving food, cleaning up after meals or part of the community cleaning team working the fifty portable toilets or the two showers we had. All of this to serve the workers and the people of a parish where only eleven homes survived the ravages of Hurricane Katrina, filled our days.

During that time my life had a singular purpose, I was in complete union with hundreds of people that I was working and living with, and I did not appreciate the bonds so quickly forged until just a few days later when I was home in Michigan with all the creature comforts I had left behind. I don’t recall now, the specific thoughts but I do recall the feelings of emptiness, melancholy, and sadness over the loss of a life of immense meaning.

Those emotions and that story come flooding back while reading John’s Gospel. These seven men fishing in the night lost as to what to do next, simply went back home to the only life they knew before they met and followed Jesus, followed God. They walked hundreds of miles, if not thousands, with him. They eat with him, laughed with him, learned from him, then watched him be executed. How do you recover from that? They simply went back to their lives and went fishing and in the dark of the night, as well as the darkness of the loss of their leader and Lord they were not even able to function as simple fisher men as, “...they caught nothing” (JH 21:3).

Then, just like that first Easter dawn, Jesus appears to them and instructs them. Before they even knew who he was they obeyed and found success in their fishing mission. It was a recalling of their lives back to Discipleship with Christ. To have faith and listen to what he had told them, and they will be successful fishermen, of humanity. Peter was the first to respond to Jesus and realizing yet another fishing miracle, like the first, plunged out of the boat with great excitement to see his Lord once again. Friends, in the darkness of our lives (not being in communion with God) we find nothing! Only in Christ do we find abundance

Then there is the fire on shore already consumed down to charcoal with fish and bread upon it. The symbolism of the miracle of the fish and loaves surly on the minds of the Disciples while their lack of a specific action I found sticking, they did not react when Jesus said, “Come, have breakfast” (JH 21:12). These are the same men who protested

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at having their feet washed just a few days ago and yet having the Lord offer them breakfast went unchallenged. I just love the thought that the possible explanation of this was the Jesus preparing breakfast for them was old school, common place, the ever servant Lord.

Now joy gives way to what would be, in my mind, extreme awkwardness to say the absolute least. Jesus has clearly forgiven Peter for his denial and all of them for falling away during his Passion, but did you notice, Jesus called Peter by his true name saying, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” (JH 21:15) THREE times Jesus asks Peter, Simon, this question over the fire. The last time Peter was asked three questions over a fire while in the presence of Jesus was the courtyard where he denied Jesus three times before the cock crowed. OUCH! Peter is on the outs; he is no longer Peter but just Simon and the shame and pain of that memory must have been crushing. But Jesus was not punishing Peter, he long forgave him and was reestablishing his place among the eleven and to again pick up the mantel and follow Jesus. Redemption can be awkward and painful, can it not?

There is more to this story than just a meeting of the disciples with the Risen Jesus. Jesus tells us that a condition of our love of him is that we feed his lambs, that we nourish and heal his sheep. If we think this applies only to Peter as the first of the popes, we're mistaken. (Volume2 Digest, Vol 62, Issue 1 - Carol & Dennis Keller)

In the deepest of darkness and despair, Jesus comes back to the Disciples not just as their master, but as the Risen Lord. He extends to them an unconditional love and forgiveness and through a meal recommissions them and brings them new hope and a new direction in life once again. “Their human weakness is dramatized in their failure to catch any fish. But the encouragement and assistance of Jesus turns their failure to success” (Volume2 Digest, Vol62, Issue 1 – Gleeson).

So, as we go through changes in our lives whether they be challenges and failures or even plastic hanging on the walls of a new church still in the midst of improvements, we can, we must, always keep our eye on Jesus. God is here with us. God is here with you. Each of you. God is with you always to guide you on your path, lift you up when you fall, and love you with an unconditional acceptance that we know is beyond our right to received but given all the same.

Friends, our Risen Lord walks our life path with us. He is there if you just look and talk to him. Remember that always. Remember that you can not push him away, but only walk away from him, but he will always be on that shore waiting for your return. Waiting to nourish you, love you, and give you guidance. Thank you, Jesus! AMEN