

Meeting the Risen Jesus in the Midst of Life

Once again, we hear of an appearance of the risen Jesus to the disciples (John 21:1-19). The encounter once again brings them excitement and reassurance. Additionally, as so often is the case, the disciples find themselves called to mission, to service and sacrifice for others. In other words, they are to be bearers of the risen Jesus to others. Recognizing this presence of Jesus, the disciples become the *Body of Christ* continuing in our world.

Looking at John's gospel we encounter several very striking aspects of the appearances of the risen Jesus. One of these is captured in the remark of Peter: "I'm going fishing." So simple, so ordinary. It hardly seems to hold a place in a spiritual reflection or the Gospel of Jesus Christ. What could it possibly have to do with an appearance of the risen Jesus? Perhaps it says a lot.

Imagine these disciples in John's telling of the story. We see them after the crucifixion. They are beginning to sense that somehow Jesus remains present among them, within their experience. They cannot figure out or say how, but Jesus remains with them. He continues to be their master, teacher and leader.

At another level, however, life goes on. They sleep, they eat, they continue to work as they did before. They go fishing. In the midst of these routines of life, the disciples find that they encounter Jesus again. It occurs in a way both ordinary and extraordinary. They recognize Jesus among them at breakfast, at the end of a night of fishing. Jesus' presence becomes evident as they share this meal of bread and fish. So simple, so ordinary.

In a series of online reflections during the second week of Easter, Richard Rohr wrote of heaven in this way: "Heaven is not about belonging to the right group; it's not about following the correct rituals. It's about having the right attitude." (Rohr, 28 April 19) This attitude is one of being life-giving. Heaven is part of our life journey, not somewhere out there in the future. Living our present life with love and compassion and service is the indication of heaven already begun in us.

For Jesus, his mission was to proclaim and reveal the kingdom of God among us. Where there is love and openness to one another. Where there is life-giving, then there is the kingdom of God. Jesus revealed this along the roads of Galilee. We walk the roads of our own time and places. As did the disciples of Jesus in their time and place. Here we find the kingdom, the way of heaven.

The disciples in John's gospel recognized the risen Jesus in their time and place – when they went fishing and at a simple meal, eating breakfast. They experienced the kingdom through the risen Jesus.

At Eucharist, like those first disciples around a charcoal fire, sharing a meal, we recognize and celebrate that Jesus continues to be among us. "Breaking bread" together expresses our recognition that we become the "Body of Christ" sent forth into our world with words and actions of good news, love, peace, compassion and service for all. In loving and life-giving experiences we make the kingdom of God real and present in our world and life.

Father John Jennings