

Third Sunday in Easter  
Acts 9: 1-20, Psalm 30, John 21:1-19  
April 10, 2016  
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We are not even half way through the Easter season today, and yet this will be the last resurrection appearance we read about this year. The first miracle in John's gospel, you'll remember, was a great quantity of fine wine at the wedding in Cana. The last will be an exorbitant catch of large fish in a net that should have burst. Whenever Jesus is present, there is significant abundance.

There is so much to like about this last resurrection appearance in John's gospel. The disciples mentioned are obviously at loose ends and unsure about what to do next even though Jesus has already appeared to them twice in Jerusalem after his death. It has been said that when you are at odds about what to do next or reeling from some disorienting or traumatic experience, do something very familiar. Engage in an enjoyable activity you can do easily and automatically without having to think too much.

In this case, Peter says, "I am going fishing." Having lived on the Sea of Galilee all his life, Peter is more at home there than anywhere else. He certainly knows how to fish.

For us it might be, "I am going to the office." Or "I am going to watch TV, read a book, take a walk or work in the garden."

Peter and the disciples just want life to return to normal for a time in a familiar setting after so much upheaval in Jerusalem. Who can blame them?

We are not sure what Jesus expected them to do after he had visited them twice, breathed the Holy Spirit on them and sent them to do his work, but it probably wasn't to go back to fishing. At any rate, Jesus finds them, guides them to a whopping catch and then feeds them on the seashore. Far from being perplexed or annoyed by their behavior, he is gladly meeting their every need.

I particularly like this story because it takes place in nature, near water, and involves basic activities of physical work and eating. The disciples are doing what is for them the most familiar and ordinary actions they know, and Jesus meets them right where they are. Can we expect Jesus to meet us when we are doing the most ordinary and routine tasks? Does Jesus seek our company and want to enrich our lives when we are at work or leisure or only when we are in church or doing what we think is his will?

In nearly all the resurrection appearances, Jesus goes to where the disciples are. Shouldn't we be looking for Jesus to meet us everywhere as well? He will. He does.

This may be the last resurrection appearance of Jesus we will read about this Easter, but the two giants of our faith are coming to the fore. We might even call this Sunday, "Peter and Paul Sunday." Peter and Paul experience a resurrection of their own.

After breakfast on the shore, Jesus asks Peter three times if he loves him. Each time Peter says yes and each time Jesus tells him to feed or tend his lambs and sheep. The same question posed to Peter three times is thought to reverse or nullify Peter's three-fold denial of knowing Jesus earlier.

Of all the disciples, Peter is chosen or commissioned by Jesus to be the chief pastor or shepherd now that Jesus will no longer be filling that role. It is understandable how Peter becomes the young church's first bishop and for Roman Catholics, their first pope. It is widely believed he was martyred in Rome. One tradition says that when he was going to be crucified, he protested that he was unworthy to die in the same manner as his Lord, so he was crucified upside down.

St. Paul, also known as Saul here in Acts Chapter 9, is initially a firebrand to purify Judaism from the Jesus' cult known as the Way. In his strict devotion to the God of Abraham and Moses, Saul understood this Jesus to be both a false messiah and heretic of the true faith. Zealous to cleanse the earth of these wayward believers, he sets out for Damascus to round up more Jewish delinquents.

Isn't it interesting that both Peter and Paul, to differing degrees, both denounce Jesus, and yet both become his most ardent devotees? Both men had to be broken before they could be remade and redirected. Peter weeps after the cock crows and he realizes he flat out denied Jesus three times. Paul is blinded for three days after he is told that he has been persecuting the Son of God by rounding up his followers.

You are probably sick of hearing again from Richard Rohr, but in the daily meditations several of us are reading in our men's group, he wrote this.

*Day 304: How To Tell A Saint*

*A saint is someone who has faced the dark side of himself and is no longer shocked by it. Saints have met and confronted the enemy within and forgiven it, joining God who forgave it first.*

*Saints know their brokenness all the way through, which causes them to rely hourly and daily on the mercy of God.*

*Saints have learned to be at home in their naked being, where God has met them and loved them at the deepest level of their ordinariness.*

That is a perfect description of Peter and Paul and all they went through to become the great saints they became.

We are imperfect as well and pretty ordinary to boot. God knows it and loves us all the more because of it. Jesus wants to meet us right where we are full of forgiveness and abounding in love for us. Once we allow ourselves be forgiven completely and loved thoroughly, we can join in the jubilation of the Psalmist today:

*Therefore my heart sings to you without ceasing;  
O Lord my God, I will give you thanks for ever. AMEN.*