

Third Sunday of Easter

John 21:1-19

On the third Sunday of our Easter celebration, we join the disciples by the Sea of Galilee for an appearance of the Risen Christ which is found only in the Gospel of John. The disciples have returned to their “normal” lives. Jesus seems to fit in quite well with these everyday activities. We see him cooking breakfast while Peter and the guys are out fishing.

But some things have changed. Because of the presence of Jesus, the disciples bring in a huge catch of fish, and the Eucharist is replayed, as Jesus offers them bread and fish for breakfast.

Even death could not separate Christ from his followers. This was true at the church’s beginning, and it has been true throughout Christian history. Jesus is present in the midst of our most “normal” activities. And his presence can transform all that we do, just as the disciples went from empty nets to 153 large fish.

The good news of Easter is also a challenge. Jesus said to Peter, not once, but three times, to feed and tend the sheep--that is, to care for all of his followers. Those who love the Lord have work to do.

Most contemporary Christians do not want to be known as sheep. Still, Jesus’ call to care for each other could not be more contemporary, particularly in a culture that values individual achievement as much as ours does.

Some examples:

Feeding one another should be taken quite literally. Millions of people continue to go without adequate food through no fault of their own. Although we cannot solve the world hunger crisis by

ourselves, we must remember that all people both near and far, are our brothers and our sisters, and we must respond accordingly.

But we can also talk about feeding in a different way—enabling people to live meaningful lives. Enabling people to have the time and the patience to see the divine presence which surrounds us. Why are we stressed out most of the time? Is life truly a competition to see how much money we can make, how much stuff we can have, how many sports we can master? Are we adults driving our kids nuts? Has our society made it too difficult for people to have a decent life? Do the people who can't keep up with the rat race really deserve to be poor?

What's the church doing in all of this? Are we just adding to the busyness and the stress? Do Christian leaders have to be in control of all that goes on in their churches, something a speaker I heard last week cautioned us about? Another speaker used an expression that was new to many of his hearers: the "violence of busyness." (I'm still thinking about that one). Are we giving Jesus a chance to be with us and to transform us, as he did those first disciples, who, by the way, didn't have to be at ten different meetings in Jerusalem right after breakfast with the boss. They had the opportunity to think about those 153 fish.

We believe that the risen Jesus is with us in even the most terrible circumstances and that good can come out of evil. An outstanding example has been Darrell Scott, who spoke at Webster Schroeder High School on Wednesday, and who said that his daughter's killers at Columbine High were human beings not monsters. We can only imagine all of the good that has come from the Rachel's Challenge Foundation, which presented a program at Fairport High last month.

But we don't need to have bad things happen to appreciate the good. We just need to remember our long held belief that because of his resurrection, Jesus is with all human beings, first century

Palestinians and 20th century Americans alike. And that he calls on everyone to serve.

So how do we experience Jesus in our lives today? How are we being called to tend the Lord's sheep?