

## What the resurrected life looks like, The Resurrected Community

In our Gospel reading in John today Chapter 21 is perhaps easy to get lost in the swirling of metaphors as the images of fish and the sheep seem to be used presented by Jesus seem to be used interchangeably during his resurrected encounter with his disciples.

The entire Gospel of John is rich with symbolism and imagery which are meant to convey a deeper meaning than what is first presented. In fact, one of main challenges of presented throughout the Gospel is the Jesus is trying to get his listeners to understand the deeper meanings laying behind what he saying. Think of Jesus referring to the destruction of the temple which he will rebuild in three days, he is referring to his body. When Jesus speaks to Nicodemus about being born again and Nicodemus takes it literally. When Jesus talks about food they don't know about after the encounter with the woman at the well.

Many of the symbols presented in earlier in our Gospel return again here in this last chapter. This is likely a convention of communication to cycle around and around the same point repeatedly so it will be understood.

I think this is certainly the case here.

Take for instance the opening. Peter is with other disciples again fishing as we have seen him before. (Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the two sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples). Seven disciples. Why seven? Because there is something within this chapter that resonates with the initial seven days of creation.

I believe Simon Peter's words to the disciples are telling here. "I am going fishing!". There is no sense of collective need of brothers, Peter has returned to his old ways. He does not exclaim, "Let's fish together" or "With God's help, may we catch some fish." He is heading out on his own. In my reading of these I see perhaps the disciples are presented by the Gospel writer as returning to an old ways, perhaps defeated after abandoning and denying their master they again have returned to, looking after themselves and their own interests. Lives has returned to a struggle for life through labour where they take and gather the sustenance they need.

We have in a sense returned to the storyline of the fall.

The other disciples will join Peter but their efforts in the darkness of night are unsuccessful. This darkness perhaps stays with them into the dawn as they do not recognize the risen Jesus, although they hear his voice presence as the dawn greets them, but they are unable to see him.

The disciples have succumbed to and accepted a world without the Jesus, even though they have encountered him two times earlier they have not yet acknowledged the power of his resurrection, or understand the new life they are called to, but the risen Lord calls out to them, to cast nets according to his commands on the other side of boat and their nets over flow with God's provision.

The contrast could not be more stark, The disciple's following their own course are lost and come up empty, but with Christ and kingdom, on the other side of the boat there is an abundance.

This abundance, I believe is what carries over through the rest of the today's Gospel.

Jesus resurrection recalls Jesus' initial encounter with the disciples at Gospel of Luke (5: 1-11 where he calls them to to join his ministry) Saying "I will make you fishers of men, or I will have you fishing for you people."

The large number of Fish that is pulled in in the net is another important aspect of this reading. While the meaning of the number is often discussion. It seems clear that this large haul of Fish would be impossible for a small group of men to haul in with only one net. We are told net did not break. Recalling Jesus words to the disciples from other verses "I will make you fishers of men" would seem to signify the ability of the Church to hold together in spite of many and diverse people in Christ.

The Gospel writer takes care to mention that as they sit down to breakfast that Jesus offers them Bread.

"Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them". Which no doubt reference Earlier John Chapter 6 verse 35 when Jesus declared, "*I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.*"

*These aspects combined together, give us an image of Church gathered together which is sustained by the bread of life.*

All of these symbols and metaphors convey strongly a sense of God's abundance and provision not just of sustenance but also community that is found in power of the resurrected Christ, Jesus Christ.

Rather than being content to merely look after their own interests and feed themselves, Jesus through his examination of their love directly, directly challenges them. Peter's discomfort is Jesus' questioning Simon Peter, 'Simon son of John, do you love me

It is important to note here that two Greek words for love Agapos and Philos make an appearance in this exchange.

Jesus twice asked Peter, "Do you Love (*agape*) me? [Do you have a Sacrificial love for me. ?]" Peter obviously remembering his denial, perhaps does not know where he stands with Jesus. So he is trying to convey his love for him. The third time, Jesus seeing Peter trying to speak to him as a friend says, addresses him, with the Phileo, as if to say, Peter are you truly my friend?

The sustenance the Jesus provides for Peter and the other disciples emerges in a new creation that is foundation of the Church. This is an image of a new creation. Seven disciples, two are unnamed are symbolic of the whole of humanity. The fish gathered into and the bread the Jesus offers the disciples are more than just food, they are a vision of the Church which is rooted in care and provision of all its members.

To close, the message for us today, is that to live as disciple is live in Love of God, through Jesus Christ, Not go merely go and fish for ourselves or to look after our needs to but live in a sense of sharing with others God's abundance and provision with others. This provision was embodied in our Lord, through his incarnation through his sacrifice on the cross and is found in his resurrected life, which is laid out for us at the banquet feast we encounter in communion.

This Gospel question for us, "is Do we love Jesus?" And if so, what kind of claim does this have on your life. Who are we called to care for, aside from yourself, and your household. Who are the sheep you are called to care for? Jesus is calling us reiterating his call to Peter and the other disciples in John Chapter 1:43 to "Follow me".

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