

OUR LADY, STAR OF THE SEA, WEYMOUTH
HOMILY FOR THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER (YEAR C)
28TH APRIL 2013

Acts 5.27-32, 40-41; Ps 29; Rev 5.11-14; John 21.1-19

Many of us have denied our Lord. Many of us will have been through testing times. Many of us have experienced tiredness, frustration, failure.

And even when we follow good principles, if we are trying our hardest but are doing it our way on our own it is likely we won't get to where we really want to be, we won't achieve the fullness of what is possible.

We may find that we can only half heartedly say the prayer of the psalmist we heard "I will praise you Lord you have rescued me...restored me to life...you have changed my mourning into dancing". How wonderful if we can sing this whole heartedly. To have the inner confidence to know we will get through testing times, to pick up and recover after whatever type of failures we may suffer.

Well, we can, and here is how.

The disciples had been through a lot. Three years in Jesus' company learning all the time and falling in love with him. Recently they had been in Jerusalem, celebrated the Passover with him. Then followed the terrible night with his arrest, they ran away frightened, he was brutally killed. After this the resurrection, unbelievable but true and he had appeared to them. What emotions must have been running through them? They would be experiencing mixtures of astonishment, doubt and belief. And now, perhaps they were tired and confused about what to do next. So, we hear that seven of them go back to what they know best, they go fishing. And we see how our Lord looks after them when they fail at this, something they should be good at, but within the story there are deeper messages. Once we have met the risen Lord, we cannot go completely back to our old way of living.

Notice how they fish all night but catch nothing. How often do our efforts at work, home, in ministry, with friends leave us with empty nets? In such moments when we experience failure, are tired or feel empty, we must listen for Jesus' words to us.

The disciples, albeit unknowingly did just that. They hear a friendly voice calling from the shore (and you may like to imagine the solidness of the shore represents the reliability and solidness of God, whilst the sea and waters the unpredictability of our lives) who tells them to cast their nets to the right of the boat.

Why don't they recognise him? Maybe the light of the morning was shining at a difficult angle, maybe they were pre-occupied. So another message – do we have any activities where we think a visit from Christ is unlikely; are we so busy within our lives that we risk not recognising his voice?

Anyway, the result is the nets are so full they can't pull them back into the boat. And this is when John, thoughtful, recognises Jesus. Peter, who is impulsive and eager, jumps into the water and rushes to Him. The others tow the net and the fish in – everyone has a part to play. We are all needed in our different ways.

What a lovely welcome it must have been for those disciples, Jesus on the shore by a fire cooking them breakfast. This is also the welcome he has for us. All that is required is obedience to his voice.

Now, John takes us deeper with this story. Remember that the last mention of a charcoal fire was when Peter denied Jesus three times; John is asking us to cast our minds back to when everyone ran away, an apparent failure. Perhaps we may also consider not just how Peter denied our Lord, but those times that we have also. We might not say aloud "I don't believe in Jesus" but we may well avoid talking about him in situations when we should. However, Jesus gives no recriminations, He simply serves a meal and they share the warmth of the fire together. There is no mention yet of any conversation. I am certain that all the disciples were warmed and strengthened simply by being in Jesus' presence.

Please think about that. When we spend time just sat close to someone we love, we don't need to speak; the simple companionship is good for us. I was brought up as a Roman Catholic but I am part of a generation that wasn't necessarily taught all that is on offer to us. So I am sure that there are many here who haven't experienced adoration of the Blessed Sacrament; who indeed don't know what I am talking about. Every Friday morning at St Joseph's church our Lord is placed on show on the altar. The Blessed Sacrament – that is Jesus, our Lord and God – is carefully put in this monstrance, used to highlight Him to us. Then we can sit and just be with Him. If you have never been, maybe it will seem a little strange at first. But ask anyone who spends time like this with our Lord and you will know even from their voice how special and indeed powerful it is. If sitting quietly with Jesus was good for the disciples, surely it will be for us as well.

Also, since some of you will have read the longer version of today's Gospel, a brief note on Jesus asking Peter three times "do you love me" then saying "feed my sheep". Jesus doesn't write Peter off but restores him fully to be the effective leader he called. Similarly, Jesus never writes us off, we can always cancel any failures by love. And of course, we can gain the strength for this simply by spending time in his presence.

So, we have seen that once we have met our Lord, whilst we still have our particular life situations we live in, we can't completely stay with our old habits, we must move on in some way. When we are struggling or busy, we must still keep alert so that we may hear His voice. Jesus never writes anyone off, instead he offers us a warm welcome. So will we spend some quiet time with Him?

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