

May 6, 2020

I often hear of fishing trips to Canada and northern Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan, zillions of other places I am sure, and the shore lunches of fresh caught fish cooked on open fires, often sautéed in butter with beer or wine, maybe a nice Chablis.

When these tales are told, they are told with smiles and contentment on the faces of the story tellers because, I imagine as I have never had the experience, but I imagine they bring back happy memories of presence, peace, and contentment.

The Gospel of John ends with just such a story except it isn't a lunch but a breakfast campfire and the chef is the risen Jesus now the Christ confirmed by the resurrection.

The apostles are out on the lake fishing again and as dawn approaches, they are catching nothing. The as yet unrecognized Christ standing on the shore tells them where that the fish can be found on the right side of the boat, so they move the nets and the beloved disciple, John, recognizes that "it is the Lord."

The Gospel gives some details about how they get to shore but when they do they find a charcoal fire with fish and bread on it but Jesus tells peter to bring some of the newly caught fish so he does, 153 of them (that exact number drives me crazy by the way and when I get to heaven one of the things I want to understand is why 153 fish and not 154 or 152).

Anyway, Jesus says, "Come, have breakfast." Bloody Mary's? Mimosas? Probably, knowing Jesus as I do!

There are those who want to make what happens next into a kind of papal conclave, but I will leave that for now and tell you what I think happens.

Jesus asks Peter three times if he loves him and three times Peter answers yes, you know that I love you. Then Jesus tells Peter the truth, that he will get old, he will lose control of his life, and will be led where he does not want to go. John adds the remark that this signifies “by what kind of death he-Peter-will glorify God.

John does not specify this death but Peter doesn’t like the idea of getting old and he resents the young John so he asks “but what will happen to John the Beloved disciple.”

Jesus replies, “What if I want him to remain until I come (a second time, we presume)?” “You follow me.”

My thoughts concern our kids, the young people in our families and in our communities. They have got to be having a very tough time of this. I am sure the little ones miss the touches and the sounds of grandparents and teachers and neighbors. They tire of the routines of isolation and social distancing, none of us are made for social distancing but as older people, presumably, we know a little bit about deferred gratification because of the realities of life.

I think of the high school kids and graduates, they should be practicing their dancing and their kissing and they cannot, they are cut off from the marvelous experiences of proms and graduations and being young and full of erotic energies.

I think of the college kids, the young adults with so much ending so abruptly, it is almost for many, I am sure like their life was taken and they are not dead but living the life of a stranger.

I think of the grieving and the fearful, the unemployed and the dangerously employed. They need our silent loving presence more than we can imagine.

We have to be careful that we do not resent reality like Peter, reality is bigger than us and the challenges and obstacles we face, I know can be embittering, overwhelming, and make us sad and anxious, but that is life in these times.

We have to remember that what remains in any and all moments of life is the possibility of love that is why Jesus wants John the Beloved Disciple to remain until "he comes again" not a date in history but a moment right now when we can pour love into this life.

We are the Beloved Disciples and we are known because we love in spite of what we can feel and fear, we can still be the love that is absent in so many places.

It is especially important for us to love those in our midst who appear to have given up on love and are impetuously rushing ahead with warnings of sad and serious consequences denied, we can, maybe, love them toward patience and wisdom and reality, away from their fear that they are not loved enough just as they are.

That is not sweet Jesus talk, but my belief that love remains always as the core reality of any life and any moment.

Try praying with shore lunches or school lunches or work lunches, dinners, parties, First Communions, Christmases and Thanksgivings, those are all domestic and real Eucharists, bring them back from the dead and give them life in the gratitude of your heart and the silence of your love.

God knows what we need, just listen and find it in the recesses of your hearts.