

April 11, 2010
Easter 3

Mother Teresa once said: “Do not think that love, in order to be genuine, has to be extraordinary. What we need is to love without getting tired. It is not how much we do, but how much love we put in the doing. It is not how much we give, but how much love we put in the giving.”

“What we need is to love without getting tired.” A friend of mine read that little quote once and said, “Well that is just great. What happens if you do get tired?” And that is a really good question. What happens when you are trying to live out your baptismal covenant as best as you can, when you are really trying to be a disciple of the Risen Lord and you just get tired? You are too weary to even think. You don’t know what to do next or how to figure it out.

I think that was what was going on with the disciples in today’s gospel. The disciples were weary. They had witnessed quite a lot with the preaching and healing and crucifixion and resurrection and all. And, truth be told, things had not turned out as they had expected them to. They were not complaining but they were confused. What did it all mean and what should they be doing now? They kind of knew - - but the details were not completely clear. Where to even start and how? And were they even up to the task?

Sometimes when I read this story I think the disciples don’t look too good in it. Here they have the benefit of all this first hand information yet they go back to fishing. It is as if they had forgotten the lessons Jesus had taught them. But then again, it makes sense they went back to what they knew. Most of us do that when we forget something. Even when we forget something as simple as where we have put the car keys, we go back to the last place we remember having them in hand and start walking. Suddenly, what had been a mystery becomes obvious. “Oh there they are. I remember now.”

So the disciples were tired and they had a problem. They couldn’t remember exactly what it was they were supposed to be doing or how they could accomplish it. “What do we do now?” they asked. “I need to think,” Peter said, “I’m going fishing.” The others said, “We’ll go with you.”

There are two stories in the gospels of Jesus helping fishermen catch an amazing number of fish. One is this one we just heard in John which occurs after the resurrection.

“‘Children, you have no fish, have you? ...Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some.’ So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish.” The other story is in Luke. Luke tells of when Peter and James and John the sons of Zebedee first met Jesus. Jesus had gotten into Peter’s boat so he could get just a bit off shore and teach the crowds. When Jesus was done with that day’s lessons he and the men in the boats went fishing. They had not been having much luck but then Jesus suggested a slightly different spot (on the other side of the boats) and the size of their catch was tremendous. It was right after that that Jesus called them to leave their boats and follow him.

There is some question among biblical scholars as to whether or not these are two different stories or are the same story just set in different parts of the gospel writings. I don't know, but I do know that Jesus has a habit of showing up at different times but in similar places in my life. Have you had that experience? So I wouldn't be surprised if these are two different occurrences. And Peter and James and John and some of the others had come full circle. They had experienced something like this before. That is how they figured out who it was on the beach.

And when he figured it out, Peter did something really important. He jumped in the water and got to shore. He did not stop to think about how tired he was or wait for an invitation or worry about whether or not this time he could walk on water or anything else, he just jumped in and waded or dog paddled or did whatever he was able to do to get to shore. And the other disciples did something really important too. They hauled the net full of fish to the shore. As another friend of mine would say, "They completed the assignment." When Jesus said go bring some of the fish over here for breakfast, Peter was able to run and get some thanks to the other fishermen.

Jesus said come join me for breakfast. Bring what you have to share. Don't worry about how you got here just come on over and join me.

Sometimes problems are really big, personal problems, national problems, global problems. Thursday is Earth Day 2010. Talk about big, 'who knows even where to start problems.' I have been following some of the legislation around water issues just in California. It doesn't matter what your politics are if you follow the issue at all you know that water in California is a huge multifaceted problem that makes a lot of people tired just thinking about it. We all know many, many other examples.

But all of us who have been through the waters of baptism have been given an assignment. We are to seek and serve Christ in all persons. Proclaim the good news. Love one another as Christ loves us. But how can we be faithful disciples at those times when we don't know quite what to do or when we are so tired we don't even want to try?

Today's gospel shows us one option. First: Go back to what you know, to a place you have encountered Christ and listen. Jesus will meet you there. When he calls, start moving in his direction. Second: Don't go alone. Make sure you are part of a community of faith. The beloved disciple pointed out the identity of the man on the beach to Peter. Paul, in the reading from Acts, needed Ananias to help him understand what had happened to him and who Christ was calling him to be. Peter would have been at a BBQ without a fish to share without the other men in the boat. And third: Come as you are. Don't worry that you don't have enough love, or energy, or ability to complete the assignment. As long as you are willing to listen, show up and share as you are able Jesus will meet you more than half way.

So, if you find yourself feeling overwhelmed, don't give up. Jesus does not give up on us. He is waiting on the beach. Bring what you have to share. It does not need to be

spectacular. Whatever it is it will be enough. Breakfast is more than half made already.
Come and be fed and then follow him.