



GOSPEL GOSSIP

Life goes on

St John 21. 1-19

Sunday 4 May

On this third Sunday of Eastertide, Jesus appears for the third time to his disciples. They are still coming to terms with his resurrection from the dead, and are probably wondering what's going to happen next. Jesus is alive, but it is not the same life as was lived before Good Friday. Peter, ever restless, announces that he's going fishing, and is joined by the others. Whilst out on the lake, they are invited by the risen Jesus to have breakfast with him, after he has shown who he was by causing them a miraculous catch of fish.

We are sometimes like those disciples, not just after a festival like Easter, when we are all fired up in our faith, but in the ordinary times of the year, when life seems just to go on. We wonder what to do, and try to occupy ourselves. Like anticipating holidays, in our spiritual lives we spend our energies looking forwards to the next event in the Church's calendar, rather than making the most of the time in which we're living.

- After Easter Day itself, do you need to be reminded of the resurrection?
- How have you encountered the risen Christ away from the empty tomb?
- Do you still need proof that the risen Christ is the same Christ as before?
- If Jesus could perform a miracle after his resurrection to reassure his disciples then, what about now?
- Does Jesus help you to live life now?

The fact that Jesus enabled his disciples to make a huge catch of fish – remembering that by and large they had been fishermen – shows that their faith in him would be a practical support in the daily lives. Faith and 'real life' are not two separate parts to our being, but are inextricable. That being so, then our faith will not only aid us in the effective and joyous living of our daily lives, but will also spill out and affect with whom we have contact: our loved ones, friends, neighbours.

It is no accident or coincidence that Jesus asks Peter three times whether he loved him. Partly this three-fold affirmation allowed Peter to atone for his three-fold denial of Jesus before his trial and to show that Jesus forgave him, but also to give him a renewed sense of purpose – looking after Jesus' sheep. For Peter, his life catching fish would be transformed into service to Jesus in fishing for people; not that they may die and be eaten up, but that they might truly live and give of their lives to others, as did the disciples.

- Peter was asked by Jesus to feed or tend his sheep. How would you go about it today?
- In what way is Jesus calling you away from your 'daily' life in order to serve him?
- Are you more prepared to be a sheep or a shepherd, or is life a bit of both?
- Do you feel that you God will be harsh in his judgement of your denial of Jesus, or forgiving?
- Is shame or embarrassment keeping you from Jesus?

It is not just in Church that we encounter the risen Lord. There we can do so with the certainty of his loving and forgiving presence, in scripture and sacrament, especially Holy Communion. But we also encounter him in the everyday and the unexpected, in situations and in people. If we are aware that Jesus is always present, as life goes on, what is our reaction to him – disbelief, shock, fear even – or is it just a loving acceptance of his statement, 'I am with you always.'?