

Commentary on the Gospel for Fri, Apr 10th 2015

Today's readings reflect the path of growth. They remind us there is no substitute for time and experience in learning and growing in a relationship of trust.

The reading from Acts shows the apostles living in tension with the culture around them. This tension did not get them down; they had a remarkable confidence. The leaders "laid hands on Peter and John and put them in custody". That is not the kind of religious experience we want, to be sure! The healing of the crippled man in Jesus' name surely encouraged them, but this miracle was only one part of a long chain of events that caused their confidence to grow. They used Jesus' words from a previous encounter with the religious leaders (compare Matthew 23 and Mark 12) to challenge their captors. Though these words were enigmatic when Jesus first said them, the apostles repeated them with new confidence. Some things had happened. Their understanding and faith had grown.

The Gospel for today seems to precede the first reading from Acts. I love the friendship and humanity lurking in this passage. I imagine Peter hanging out with his friends (including John) near the sea when he stands up and announces, "I am going fishing." When guys are hanging out together and one announces that he is going to do something, the others often go along because of the friendship, not because they want to do the same thing, too. They probably went along, thinking, "OK, if it pleases you." And then they fished all night without a nibble. Perhaps their quiet conversations included, "Great idea, Peter. Sure glad I didn't waste my time sleeping!"

Calling out from the shore, Jesus tells them something that probably seemed silly: "Cast the net over the right side of the boat." Perhaps they laughed and made sport over the suggestion, but they apparently overcame their skepticism. The catch surprised them all. John figured out the puzzle first: this was Jesus. Peter agreed and jumped into the water.

Jesus said to his friends, "Come, have breakfast." He had already been cooking fish and bread for them. I wonder if they did not remember when Jesus told them to take fish and bread from a boy to feed thousands. But this time, the meal was just for them. Jesus told them to bring some more fish. These fishermen would become fishers of men, as Jesus had also told them. In the Acts reading, more than 5000 came to believe in Jesus because of their faithful testimony. Do you think they recognized the connection?

Signs and signals often accompany us on our journey. Sometimes I shake my head over signs I rejected, misinterpreted, or just plain overlooked. Having lost my father this past year, I think often

upon the signs of love and guidance he sent me through his life. Sometimes I did not get them at the time, but they meant more to me later on, when I had lived a little more and perhaps had grown a little more receptive. We would each do well to pause and be open to signs that may not be obvious, but which are showing us a path of love to take or of danger to avoid. And may the Lord give us epiphanies from time to time, which help us grow in faith. And may we truly know in this season that our risen Lord is truly with us, and He is our friend, indeed. Thanks be to God.

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