

**April 18, 2010 Third Sunday of Easter**

**The Reverend Canon Joye Q. Cantrell**

It is now two weeks since we celebrated Christ's resurrection. Things are pretty much back to normal in our lives. If I were to ask you "how was your Easter?" you might tell me about how beautiful the service here at Trinity was, what a wonderful family lunch you had and about the great pictures that you got of the children in Easter finery. But that was two weeks ago and now you are finished spring break and back to normal (what ever that may be).

In the gospel reading today we find that the disciples too had gone back to life as they knew it before Jesus. They are not all together anymore, we find just seven back to Galilee fishing. They know that Jesus has risen, they have seen him but they must have asked themselves what do we do now? Not knowing what to do they did what they knew how to do; they went home and they went fishing.

It had been a long night and they had caught nothing. Then a man on the shore-the resurrected Lord-tells them to put the nets out on the other side. And the catch is so big that it almost broke the nets.

They come to the shore and Jesus has breakfast frying on a charcoal fire. I can image that they were tired and hungry and scared and confused all at the same time. They sat and they ate. Jesus didn't give them a sermon, or a lecture or a book he gave them something to eat. The resurrected Lord, the God who was there when the world was laid out... He sat on the side of the

sea and he broke bread with his friends. He made breakfast and he shared it with his friends. What an amazing thing!

Jesus had completed his task on the cross. The ransom was paid, our sins had been atoned for and if I were Jesus I would have called it quits and gone on to heaven. But what he needed to do had not been completed. He needed to embolden the disciples, the church for the jobs still to be done. This Peter that had never quite gotten it, he needed to be empowered to become the rock. Peter needed to feel and to know that Jesus had forgave him. It is no wonder that the gospel writer reports that Peter felt hurt by the interrogation that Jesus gives him. On the night before Jesus' death it was Peter who objected that he should wash Jesus' feet rather than to have his own feet washed by Jesus. It was Peter who boldly pronounced that not only would he never betray Jesus, but would gladly die in his defense. It was also Peter who denied Jesus three times in the hours before his crucifixion. Maybe Peter needed to let the past go. Pause It is amazing what a shared meal by the sea in the morning light can do.

“Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” “yes, Lord: you know that I love you.”

“Feed my lambs.”

“Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” “ Yes, Lord: you know that I love you.”

“Tend my sheep.”

“Simon, son of John, do you love me?” “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.”

“Feed my sheep.”

And then Jesus finishes with the words: “Follow me.”

Instructions for Peter about how to live in Christ’s name. To do what he has just done there on the lakeshore; to provide for or to tend them. (the Greek could be more literally translated to shepherd them.) Feed my lambs. Share a meal. Share my body, share my blood. Love one another.

What does this appearance reveal to us about Jesus and what does it tell us about discipleship? Now I am sure there are many possible answers to that question but I believe that this appearance is about the kind of life we are called to live as disciples of the risen Lord. The vision that Jesus seems to have for his followers is centered on food and love, or feeding and loving others. In just these few verses Jesus first provides food, causing an abundance of fish to school where there have been none all night. He then gathers his disciples together for a meal, sharing bread and fish with them for breakfast. He then exhorts Peter to feed others, reentering his request three times, and only then does Jesus give his final command to “follow me.”

The link between food and love comes as absolutely no surprise to those of us who live in the south. We show people we love them when we feed them, it is as simple as that. We have always known that. Have a tragedy-we will bring you food. Have a celebration-we will share food.

Why do we at Trinity serve breakfast every Sunday? Because Jesus told us to feed his lambs.

Why do we go to Washington Street every week to serve lunch? Because Jesus told us to feed his lambs.

Why do we go to the winter shelter to serve supper? Because Jesus told us to feed his lambs.

Why do we stay in Haiti building a school on the side of a mountain? Because Jesus told us to feed his lambs and to love one another.

And while we do all of those things I have found that the ones who gather together to chop and dice, to mix and cook, to serve and clean are fed too; fed by the shared sacred task. In her newest book Barbara Brown Taylor says “To make bread or love, to dig in the earth, to feed an animal or cook for a stranger—these activities require no extensive commentary, no lucid theology. All they require is someone willing to bend, reach, chop, and stir. Most of these tasks are so full of pleasure that there is no need to complicate things by calling them holy. And yet these are the same activities that change lives, sometimes all at once and sometimes more slowly, the way dripping water changes stone. In a world where faith is often construed as a way of thinking, bodily practices remind the willing that faith is a way of life.” The doers and the receiver are both changed.

Let me emphasize that: faith is a way of life.

For the last few weeks I have been reading a book entitled *The Message and the Kingdom: how Jesus and Paul ignited a revolution and transformed the ancient world*. The authors tell us about the members of that very early church. He says “Theirs was not an otherworldly or surrealistic apocalyptic vision, based on the clash of heavenly armies or the sudden, miraculous descent of a New Jerusalem. It was a vision of a world in which Israelites would treat each other as brothers and sister, not slaves, beasts of burden, or saleable commodities. And as they fanned out to spread the word of the Kingdom of God in the Jewish communities of their home cities of Egypt, Greece, Italy, Asia Minor and Syria, they fervently believed that this new world did not lie in the distant future but was already a dawning reality.”

For those of us left here in the flesh, some two thousand years and two weeks past Resurrection Sunday this story serves as a guide for how we are to connect the gift of salvation we receive in Holy Communion with the call to sanctification that invites us to conform our lives to Christ just as the first Christians did. It is here and now that we are invited to do for others as he has done for us: feed, heal, and love.