

## Why Not Loaf and Fish? [Text - John 21:1-17]

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The beginning of this morning's New Testament reading sounds a little strange, and a bit anticlimactic. On Easter morning, Jesus' followers discover that his tomb is empty, and are told by heavenly messengers that he is alive! That evening, the Risen Christ miraculously passes through locked doors, to reassure those frightened followers that he is still with them. The next week he does it again, this time inviting Thomas to stop doubting and to start believing! Jesus then breathes Holy Spirit upon those astounded Apostles, empowering them to go into the world and do extraordinary things. And today the narrative picks-up with Simon Peter boldly proclaiming, "I am going...fishing!" And the other disciples say..."Great! We'll go with you!" [Really?]

Considering all that's happened to them, taking this impromptu fishing trip seems a little weird, and kind of dull; but maybe it's exactly what those disciples need. You can only ride an emotional roller-coaster of adrenalin for so long, before you need to take a break. And what better way for those fishermen to do so, than to go back to what's familiar to them - to get in their boat and bring-in a nice catch. Unfortunately, it doesn't quite work-out that way; as they fish all night, and catch *nothing*.

Now maybe the reason the disciples fall back on their fishing, is because they're completely baffled by what has happened, and quite anxious about what might happen next. So while they're waiting for a clearer understanding of what the Holy One might have in store for them, why *not* go fishing? After all, it gives them *something* to do. It gets them out of the house, helps clear their heads, and it's a very natural part of who they are. Perhaps the same point could be made about you and me today. Not that we should necessarily go on a fishing expedition; but that it's O.K. to take our time as we figure-out what comes next for *us*.

In those transitional times of Life, when we're not quite sure where - or how - our Sacred Source is leading us, faithfully going-about our everyday tasks can be an excellent way to remain open and available. After all, it was when Peter and the others were performing their jobs as fishermen, that they first heard Jesus' call to follow. And, quite fittingly, as they return to that familiar setting, they once again discover that the Living Christ is still among them. And the same holds true for you and me today.

The compelling power of the Resurrection, is that it draws us back to our everyday life with its ups and downs, its struggles and successes, its tremendous joys, and even its terrible tragedies. But we go back *realizing* that something is profoundly different! Because like those first followers, you and I can now look-up from our boatload of troubles and concerns, and see that welcoming figure on the distant shore. We can hear Christ's encouraging voice calling *us* to try again, and to not give-up! So like those first disciples, we persevere; and we find that our net is once again full, and we have not been abandoned.

We remember that the Risen Christ is still among us:  
The Compassionate One, who declares and demonstrates that Divine Love is for *all* people - particularly the outcast, the poor and the persecuted;  
The Faithful One, whose unrelenting proclamation of the Holy One's inclusive welcome leads to his own persecution and death;  
The Ever-Living One, whose gracious love continues to embrace us all, just as it embraces those disciples long ago.

As Jesus prepares a special meal for them on that shore, he also prepares a Welcoming Table for you and me - a Table where all are invited and included, and where each person's gifts and contributions are appreciated and valued. For just as Jesus asks those disciples to share their catch-of-the-day, he also asks you and me to offer the fruits of our labors, to make the meal complete. "Your efforts *are* important," Jesus says, "Because now it is *your* hands and hearts that will share Divine Love with others. And if you truly love me and want to follow my path, you *will* feed my sheep and tend my lambs. You will treat every hungry or hurting person around you with the utmost compassion and care. You will let your light shine-through the darkness of divisiveness and discord. And by doing so, you will come to know the tremendous joy of living fully and freely as beloved children of our One Heavenly Parent!" The Good News of Easter can completely change our approach to Life, by reminding us that every person we meet is a precious child of the Holy One. It infuses us with the power to faithfully follow the Way of Jesus Christ in our day-to-day living. So whether we're carrying-out our duties at the office, or caring for a person in need, Christ's Living Presence can transform our task into something special and sacred.

Today, the Easter message reminds us that Divine love *continues* to rise-up and meet us every day - no matter where we are! It strengthens our faith, so that you and I can face Life's storms and struggles with a renewed confidence and peace. And like those faithful followers of old, you and I can find genuine purpose and joy in our work, in our worship, in our relationships, and even in our leisure activities. So go ahead and fish, or loaf! Bird, or golf! Plant your garden, play with your grandkids - open your heart to whatever new experiences Life presents you! And remember that your life is the Holy One's greatest gift to you - so enjoy it, embrace it, enrich it - and freely share it with everyone you encounter on the journey.