

DAY 8

I - TIBERIAS

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After the Lord's passion and death we want to continue *listening to him, my beloved Son*, as he once more makes himself present to the disciples. By the time he manifests himself to them on the shore of Lake Tiberias, they are already aware of his resurrection. Indeed, the narrative begins with the words: *After this...* that is after his manifestation to them in the upper room. So, this one manifestation is intended to further strengthen their faith and to fine-tune it.

It would be helpful, using “imaginative contemplation”, to imagine ourselves as being present to the scene, becoming part of it, as we relish the interaction between Jesus and his disciples. The lessons we can learn from this event can be clustered around three separate moments.

1. THE MIRACULOUS CATCH. As he had done in previous encounters after his resurrection, Jesus enters the scene almost casually and he engages them in what sounds almost like “small talk”: *have you caught anything?* As had happened in chapter five of Luke, he dares to tell seasoned fishermen how and where to catch fish, yet with one exception. In Luke's chapter five the disciples knew it was Jesus, but here it is a kibitzer that tells them. What does a land-lubber know about fishing? Amazingly they do it and again it happens.

They are all so busy with the catch, that they do not seem to be able to look beyond that chore and recognize the kibitzer. That is, all except “the beloved disciple”, who realizes: *I have seen this before... it is the Lord!* It seems obvious that their past experience of Jesus was not available to them, except to “the beloved disciple”. And yet Jesus had expected them to remember their experience with him: *When I sent you without... did you lack anything?* [Lk. 22: 35]; [*when I multiplied*] *the five loaves for the five thousand... the seven loaves for the four thousand... how many baskets did you collect?* [Mt. 16: 9-10]; *Don't you remember?* We need to keep our experience of the Lord available to ourselves and indeed also to others, as needed. After the “alert” had been sounded –*it is the Lord!*– they all know and that is why they do not bother to ask him: *who are you?*

They are now in Galilee, perhaps heeding the Lord's injunction. In the gospel of Matthew [28: 7] the angels at the tomb send a message to the disciples through the two Marys: *...he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him.* The word Galilee is clearly a geographical reference to that region to the North of Judea, but Galilee was also the locus of the disciples' encounters with Jesus during his public life. So, we may read the message also as telling the disciples: *re-visit your past experiences of having been encountered by the Lord and in that re-visiting you will again be encountered by him.* We all have our own “Galilees”, our personal experiences of having been encountered by the Lord in the course of our lives, but, in order to be able to re-visit those experiences and there be encountered again by the Lord, they have to remain available to us.

2. THE QUESTIONING OF PETER. As soon as Peter hears *it is the Lord!*, he has no time to waste. He covers himself somewhat and jumps into the water. His faith may have wavered, but his love had certainly not wavered. Little did he know what he was in for, because after breakfast Jesus engages him in very personal conversation: *Do you love me?* A triple question by a charcoal fire addressed to the one who three times had denied him also by a charcoal fire. I am sure that this

time his past experience of having three times denied that he even knew Jesus was all too available to Peter and, even if he was perhaps smarting from the repeated question, he does give –also repeatedly– an unwavering answer: *you know I do*. But Jesus does not just accept the seeming retraction repeated three times, he gives Peter each time a mission: *feed my lambs, my sheep*. The exchange reveals a two-sided coin. On one side: if you love me, you must minister to my sisters and brothers. On the other side of the coin: if you are willing to minister to my sisters and brothers, you must first love me. This two-sided coin exhibits a circular dynamic: service is a corollary and a manifestation of our love of the Lord, but love of the Lords is a precondition to engage in service to others.

We need to pray that we be helped in keeping our experience of the Lord available to ourselves and that we remain aware of the two sides of the coin: service to others as corollary of our love of God and love of God as a precondition for being at the service of others.

3. THE CHALLENGE OF PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY. Peter would not be Peter, if he had just minded his own business, but he could not resist. When he spotted nearby “the beloved disciple” after Jesus had predicted a hard road ahead for Peter, he had to ask: *Lord, what about him?* His question exemplifies what could be called “spirituality by comparison”. Sometimes we may be tempted to look at our baptismal calling not in terms of what it demands of us, but in terms of what it may demand of someone else. Yet each baptismal calling is unique in its specificity. Each person goes through progressive specific callings, as we keep growing up. First a calling to be faith-filled children, then a calling to be a faith-filled student, a faith-filled parent etc., and all this within the general baptismal calling to fidelity to Christ’s message. Even the same specific calling is perceived at different levels by different persons and thus individual faith responses are bound to be somewhat different. “Spirituality by comparison” makes no sense.

REFERENCE SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

TIBERIAS

Jn. 21: 1-23

After this, Jesus revealed himself again to his disciples at the Sea of Tiberias. He revealed himself in this way. Together were Simon Peter, Thomas called Didymus, Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, Zebedee’s sons and two others of his disciples. Simon Peter said to them: *I am going fishing*. They said to him: *we also will come with you*. So, they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. When it was already dawn, Jesus was standing on the shore; but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, *Children, have you caught anything to eat?* They answered him, *No*. So, he said to them: *cast the net over the right side of the boat and you will find something*. They cast it and were not able to pull it in because of the number of fish. So, the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter: *it is the Lord*. When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he tucked in his garment, for he was lightly clad, and jumped into the sea. The other disciples came in the boat, for they were not far from shore, only about a hundred yards, dragging the net with the fish. When they climbed out on shore, they saw a charcoal fire with fish on it and bread. Jesus said to them: *bring some of the fish you just caught*. So, Simon Peter went over and dragged the net ashore full of one hundred fifty-three large fish.

Even though there were so many, the net was not torn. Jesus said to them: *come, have breakfast.* And none of the disciples dared to ask him *who are you?*, because they realized it was the Lord. Jesus came over and took the bread and gave it to them, and in like manner the fish. This was now the third time Jesus was revealed to his disciples after being raised from the dead.

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter: *Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?* He said to him: *yes, Lord, you know that I love you.* He said to him: *feed my lambs.* He then said to him a second time: *Simon, son of John, do you love me?* He said to him: *yes, Lord, you know that I love you.* He said to him: *tend my sheep.* He said to him a third time: *Simon, son of John, do you love me?* Peter was distressed that he had said to him a third time *do you love me?* and he said to him: *Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.* Jesus said to him: *feed my sheep. Amen, amen, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to dress yourself and go where you wanted; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.* He said this signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when he had said this, he said to him: *follow me.*

Peter turned and saw the disciple following whom Jesus loved, the one who had also reclined upon his chest during the supper and had said: *Master, who is the one who will betray you?* When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus: *Lord, what about him?* Jesus said to him: *what if I want him to remain until I come? What concern is it of yours? You follow me.* So, the word spread among the brothers that that disciple would not die. But Jesus had not told him that he would not die, just *what if I want him to remain until I come? What concern is it of yours?*