

3rd Sunday of Easter

In the Gospel of John, John likes to make connections. Sometimes these connections are easy to see. At other times, they are not. That is the case with our Gospel reading today (Jn 21:1-19). The connection that may be easy to notice is the meal that Jesus offers to His disciples. Jesus had prepared bread and fish for His disciple to eat. Jesus had prepared another meal for people to eat before earlier in the Gospel. You might recall the story of the multiplication of loaves and fish, in which Jesus fed a large crowd with only five loaves of bread and two fish (see Jn 6:9). Jesus is the One who provides for the needs of His people.

The connection that may not be easy to see is when our Gospel reading mentions the charcoal fire. Where else was a charcoal fire mentioned? After Jesus had been arrested and was being accused in front of the Sanhedrin, Peter was there warming himself by a charcoal fire (see Jn 18:18). While Peter was warming himself by the fire he was accused three times of being a disciple of Jesus. Three times Peter denied that he was a disciple (Jn 18:17, 25-27). Fear had caused Peter to deny that he was a disciple of Jesus.

After His resurrection, Jesus and several of His disciples are gathered around a charcoal fire; and Jesus asks Peter three times, "Do you love me?" (see Jn 21:15-17) Three times Peter had denied Jesus; three times Jesus offered Peter reconciliation. Three times Peter had given into fear; three times Jesus offered Peter mercy and love. Jesus did not define Peter by his failure. Jesus wanted Peter to learn from his mistake, move forward and become a better disciple. This was accomplished by the love and grace that Jesus provided.

God does not want to define us by our failures. God does not want to hold our mistakes over our heads and never let go of them. He wants us to learn from our mistakes, move forward, and become better disciples. This reminded me of a time when a lady came to talk to me several years ago. She was in her mid-thirties at the time. She mentioned that whenever there is a family reunion, the members of her family always remind her of the way that she behaved when she was about 14-15 years old. At that time in her life she admitted that she was a rebel. She caused much trouble and grief for her family. Unfortunately, her family never would let her forget about it. They always held it over her head. They were defining her by the way that she acted at the age of fourteen. She had matured and moved forward since then, but her family wouldn't allow her to move forward. In their eyes she would always be that troublemaker.

God does not do this to us, nor does He want to do this to us. God wants us to admit our mistakes, turn to Him for forgiveness, learn from our mistakes (try not to repeat them again), and then move forward becoming better and holier disciples. God wants to define us by this new and improved person that we have become. All done by the help of His love and grace. "Do you love me?" Jesus asks us. Hopefully all of us will answer Him, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." God wants to define by the way that we grew in His grace, and became the beloved sons and daughters that He wants us to be.