

Easter 3
April 22, 2007
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3 weeks ago there was a commercial that ran on both TV and radio. It told us to get excited; it's opening day. Well I don't want to talk about that today. I want to talk about bumper stickers.

When I am driving I love to observe what people put on their cars or read the bumper stickers. It is, I suppose, a way of telling other people something about yourself. 'I'd rather be fishing' or 'Don't laugh its paid for.' Or 'my other car is a Porsche.'

Then there are the plaques like the fish or the fish with the feet and the words Darwin inside of it.

Of all the plaques and the bumper stickers the ones that have some kind of Christian proclamation are the ones that really catch my eye. Especially when they say something like 'Jesus loves you' as the driver does not let you into traffic from the ramp. Or the one that says 'Honk if you love Jesus' as they honk at you dummy because the light has changed to green and it has been 2 seconds since it happened.

Or follow me to my church as they whiz down the street at a rate of knots that even guardian angels have a hard time keeping up with, never mind the car with its flashing lights.

What I am saying is that it seems that if you are going to be public about your faith then more is to be expected of you as you live your life professing to be a person of faith.

But when we read this morning's gospel I guess it is OK not to expect any more of those who profess to live the faith because when we look at this morning's gospel what do we find.

After three years of wandering with the man called Jesus and being told and shown that God was going to usher in a new way for all people to have a relationship with him-After being told that all this would happen through the death and resurrection of the man called Jesus and after being present with Jesus through his death and resurrection, do we find the disciples hard at work doing all of these things that Jesus asked them to do?

No -they went back to where they were at the beginning of all of this. They went back to fishing. They went back to the old ways, the familiar ways.

And it was not very productive.

No fish were caught. Until this man tells them to cast their nets on the right side of the boat and the catch was 153 fish. And then this man fixed breakfast for them and although they knew it was Jesus they dared not ask him who he was or even acknowledge him as Jesus. I think there is a real good reason for this. You see Jesus had given his life in the hope that these men would go and begin the work that he left them. And so when they realize it was Jesus on the beach they know that if they acknowledge him they admit to being failures. They admit to being people who took no risks for the sake of the gospel. They admit to being fearful and anxious, confused, and unsure. Because of this they went back to the familiar. They went back to their old lifestyle, went back to the old ways of living. They simply retreated because of fear. When Jesus came their lifestyle was not reflective of how he had thought it would be.

Yet taking that story as it is does not give the full picture.

Because what happens next is the most wonderful conversation between Peter and Jesus. Jesus asks Peter, "Do you love me?" And Peter, with all of his memories of three times denying Jesus, his brazen attitude about never forsaking Jesus, his forthrightness in his proclamation of Jesus as the son of God, is now asked three times by Jesus, "Do you love me?" Each time he says yes and each time Jesus gives him a command.

"Feed my lambs, tend my sheep, feed my sheep."

Jesus did not chastise the disciples for going back to fishing. What he did was refocus their attention on the work that he gave them, and all of us, to do. The work of mission. The work of reflecting God's love for all people in the words that we use and in the way that we live

In our Christian Journey we can never go back to the way things used to be. Our future does not lie in the past. In our Christian journey we also can never stay as we are. That's why we call it a journey- our Christian life both as individuals and as a community of faith involves movement.

Feed my sheep, tend my sheep, feed my lambs. The movement required of all of us is to feed the lambs, tend the sheep and feed the sheep. We are called to be missionaries for Christ in the place where he has put us; with the people he has put us with both inside and outside of these walls.

The only sign, the only bumper sticker, the only plaque, that Christ has, is us.

May our lives always be reflective of the deep love that Jesus has for all people. May our community of faith be always reflective of a place that does not look back or is content with staying as we are.

May we always be reflective that there are sheep and lambs who do need to be tended and it is our responsibility to do so.

Amen.