

Third Sunday of Easter (C)

May 5, 2019

Acts of the Apostles 5:27-32, 40b-41

Revelation 5:11-14

John 21:1-19

On this Sunday of Easter, we welcome a number of our young people to join us at the altar and, for the first time, to share in Eucharist. I have a story that I will share with them and I share it with you as well. I believe this story comes from Fr. Anthony de Mello, a spiritual teacher.

A farmer found an eagle's egg and put it in the backyard nest of a hen. The eaglet hatched with the brood of chicks and grew up with them. All his life the eagle did what the backyard chickens do, thinking he was a backyard chicken. He scratched the earth for worms and insects. He clucked and crackled. He would trash his wings only to glide for a few feet into the air.

Years past and he grew old. One day he saw a magnificent bird far above him in the cloudless sky. It glided in graceful majesty among the powerful wind currents, with scarcely a beat of its strong golden wings. The eagle looked up in awe. "Who's that?" He asked. "That's the eagle, the king of the birds," one of the chickens said. "He belongs to the sky. We're chickens—we belong to the earth." So the eagle lived and died a chicken, for that is what he believed he was.

In the gospel lesson today, the risen Jesus shares a meal, actually his final meal with his disciples. The passage symbolizes a new beginning and the call for the disciples to go deeper and grow spiritually. In this third appearance to the disciples, Jesus seems to address the confusion and guilt surrounding his passion and death. The night of fishing is empty but the morning is abundant with life. Jesus appears on the shore of the lake and directs their efforts. With the enormous catch of fish, they realize the risen Lord has come to them again. The bread and fish Jesus serves them symbolizes his divine love and life for the world.

You will remember that on the night of Jesus' arrest, Peter would not follow the Master's lead. Three times as he sat around a charcoal fire in the courtyard of the high priest, Peter denied being a disciple or even knowing

Jesus. Here, at the break of dawn, is another charcoal fire on the shore of Lake Tiberius and Peter has a chance to redeem himself and his actions.

“Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?” Peter responds, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you!” Three times Jesus asks and three times Peter responds. This is ritual movement. Each time Jesus asks and Peter responds, it takes Peter and his disciples to a deeper relationship with Jesus and the community of believers that would follow. Actually, without mentioning the actions of the past and without Peter offering any direct remorse, Jesus lifts Peter and the disciples from their betrayal. Jesus is only focused on the future, entrusting the disciples with the care of his church. The foundation of their ministry is love and devotion to Jesus the Christ.

And so, there is nothing wrong with being a backyard chicken if that is what we are meant to be. But there is something wrong if we are meant to be soaring eagles and we end up being backyard chickens.

Unfortunately, the world and the human family are not in a good place right now. The sadness, the divisions among us, the violence, are what Jesus came into this world to address. The gift of Eucharist is the powerful presence Christ that can sustain us in these difficult times. Christ teaches by example, how we are to respond to one another and be instruments of peace!