

Session 7

A new day dawns

Stillness

Take a moment to become still as we begin this session:

Pay attention to your breathing, without changing the rhythm. Notice your breathing in . . . and your breathing out . . . notice the rhythm . . . the depth . . . the feel of the air entering and leaving your mouth or nose . . . take three deeper breaths . . .

We will now hear this session's reading from the Gospel of John.

Scripture

(John 21: 4-12)

Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, 'Children, you have no fish, have you?' They answered him, 'No.' He said to them, 'Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some.' So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish. That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, 'It is the Lord!' When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on some clothes, for he was naked, and jumped into the lake. But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging a net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, only about a hundred yards off.

When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. Jesus said to them, 'Bring some of the fish that you have just caught. So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred and fifty-three of them; and though there were so many, the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, 'Come and have breakfast.'

Reflection

The disciples are traumatised. The friend they had believed would save the world has been brutally executed, and they themselves are known collaborators. In their desperation they have gone back to where it all began, back to fishing, but they have caught nothing. Even the lake reflects back the sick emptiness in their hearts.

However, the darkness of Good Friday and the emptiness of the tomb are about to give way to a new daybreak and an unexpected fullness. They notice a stranger on the shore.

It's a feature of almost all the resurrection appearances that the people to whom Jesus appears fail to recognise him. In this fishing boat on a sorrow-laden early morning, only one person recognises Jesus – the one 'whom Jesus loved'. This suggests that we will recognise the risen presence through the eyes of love, and when we open these inner eyes, we will find the signs of resurrection all around us.

Inigo leads us into the miracle of resurrection in the Fourth Week, or stage, of his Exercises. He invites us to be present in prayer to the appearances of the risen Christ and to reflect on what resurrection means for us in our everyday lives. As always, our practical companion is eager for us to see resurrection not just as an historic event in which we believe, but as an ongoing dynamic reality calling and enabling us to live our lives to the fullest and truly grow back better from the trauma of the past.

Earlier in our Lenten journey our life's 'boat' was launched when Jesus stepped into it, and urged us to put out into deeper water. Now, as we draw close to the end of this journey together, he gives us another unexpected invitation – to put down our nets on the other side of the boat. This makes little sense by human logic. If there are no fish on one side of the boat why would there be fish on the other side – and in such overwhelming numbers? But the disciples do as he suggests.

Perhaps this instruction, as we reflect on it in our own prayer today, is actually inviting us to look at life from a radically different point of view. Perhaps what we think is a stumbling block is really a stepping stone. Perhaps the person who gives us the most trouble is the piece of grit in our oyster that has the potential to become a pearl. Are we being asked to pray outside the box?

But today's reading promises that the time of frustration and hopelessness is nearly over. Transformation has taken place in the tomb and has released a new energy, capable of transforming our world. This is also a promise that transformation can happen in our own

experience of darkness, disappointment, and the death of our dreams, but it asks us to change our way of seeing things and cast our nets from the other side of the boat. We have adapted to so much during the past year. God asks us now to turn our hearts around too, to create a different tomorrow, to grow back better from all that the pandemic has taught us.

But right now, a stranger we already know but don't easily recognise, is preparing a barbecue on the shore. Are we ready to join him for breakfast?

Talk to God

There are signs of resurrection all around us - in the kindness of strangers, in the faithfulness of those who care for the sick and the lonely, in the food banks and the community volunteers, in the patience of teachers, in the simple exuberance of a child at play and the quiet wisdom of an elderly friend, in the new growth and changing seasons that our wounded earth continues to give us so unconditionally – in all of these and so many other ways, we meet the power of resurrection, and the spirit of the risen Christ. Where have you encountered the stranger on the shore this week?

What does it mean to you to 'cast your net from the other side of the boat'? Is there any issue or situation or relationship in your life that you feel God is asking you to see from a different perspective? Try holding up the mirror of prayer to this matter and see how it might look from the other side of your heart.

The time between Good Friday and Easter Sunday can feel like empty space, but it is precisely in this empty space that the miracle of transformation happens and new energy is released, like a butterfly from a chrysalis. Try bringing any places of emptiness in your own life consciously into the light of the Holy Spirit. These places are your own Holy Saturdays where transformation begins.

Make a note in your journal of any moments this week when you have glimpsed the power of resurrection. As you look into the mirror of prayer, try expressing what you see, either in words or pictures. Notice especially anything that takes you by surprise or overturns your expectations.

This week we might ask for the grace to see our circumstances through the eyes of love, to



recognise the light of resurrection already dawning in our lives and our world, and to have the courage to cross to the other side of the boat and be open to God's surprises where we least expect them.