

HOMILY — 3rd Sunday of Easter, C 2019
By Rev. Bob Schramm, OSFS

One of the ways to describe Gospel stories such as the one we just heard is the word narrative.

A long time ago I heard a scholar named Walter Brueggemann describe narrative in this way he said:

“Narrative functions not simply to report what happened, but to present what happens in the imagination of the community when there are tellers and listeners who have the courage to dream.”

The Gospel story we just heard, and really the whole Gospel of John, is intended to help us listeners dream of the way God intends the world to be and then to give us the tools to make that dream a reality with God's help.

Brueggemann says the narrative functions not to tell what happened (literally). The narrative functions to help the listener to participate in its happening.

So, maybe at issue here is not whether or not Jesus literally fixed breakfast for them on the seashore.

Maybe at issue here is, will you let this story lead you to a place where you see your role in being a force for God's love and forgiveness in the world?

We have this lovely Easter story about Jesus helping the disciples after they've had this very exhausting, dark, fruitless night out fishing.

Now the narrator, the one Brueggemann call "the teller" expects us (the listeners) to recognize our place in this story.

That means perhaps remembering our own stories of dark, fruitless, discouraging moments when nothing was going right.

Notice:

Today's story begins in the darkness — a whole night of darkness, discouragement, of catching nothing.

Do you know those moments, those nights, those months, church?

If we go back to the beginning of the John's Gospel, we hear:

"The light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness did not overcome it."

In this morning's narrative, suddenly the Light is standing on the seashore and everything changes

Notice:

Jesus calls the disciples "children" in the narrative this morning.

In the beginning of John's Gospel, the narrator says:

"To his own he came, yet his own did not accept him.

Any who did accept him he empowered to become children of God.

There's a hint that Jesus is now speaking of the disciples, including us,

as Children of God.

A question arises: Do you and I have the humility it takes
to see ourselves as needy "children of God?"

Notice;

There's a charcoal fire and a meal of bread and fish.

There's only one other place in this Gospel where there's a charcoal fire.
It's the one in the courtyard where Peter outright denied knowing who Jesus was.

This breakfast suddenly becomes a meal of reconciliation, of forgiveness,
a kind of Eucharist.

All these disciples, recently cowardly traitors, are gathered with him at table.
This part of the story reflects the conviction that the risen Lord
will not leave his children like orphans
but will give them his power for his mission.

It's so important to find, to know, our place in this story.

Now we come to the final part of the narrative.

Jesus asks Peter three times, "Do you love me?"

A rather odd question. Can you imagine asking someone that,
or being asked that? Do you love me?

I don't think Jesus is asking the question out of his own neediness
to know the answer.

Notice:

Jesus first asks: Do you love me more than these?

Remember the stories about the disciples arguing
about who among them was the greatest.

That may well be what Jesus had in mind when he asked:

"Do you love me, more than these?"

The greatest is the one whose love for him is "the greatest."

Peter's response seems like the response of one coming to humility.

He simply says: "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.

And two more humbling times, Peter is asked "Do you love me?"

Like a child Peter responds, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you."

Now I don't think any of us over 65 has much trouble finding our place
in the part of the story where Jesus says,

"When you are grow old you will stretch out your hands

and someone else will lead you where you where you would rather not go.

The question is, of course, for those us us who are being led where we
would rather not go: "Am I doing this with the attitude of Christ?"

Finally, right back to the beginning. "Follow me."

Narrative — We're called to participate in ongoing CONVERSION