

# Homily: Jesus invites us to act

A conversational reflection on John 21:15-17 by Rev. Sheila Miranda and Rev. Daniel Miranda

## Rev. Daniel Miranda

Have you ever seen those optical illusions where you look at something, and they're supposed to be two pictures? You know, there's two pictures because they tell you that there's two pictures. And you can only find one and you look at it, and you look at it. And there's usually somebody standing by me, who was testing my acuity. And they're telling me, it's right there. It's right there. But sometimes I can see it. Sometimes I can't.

## Rev. Sheila Miranda

I know that first image always jumps out at me as well. And it's hard for my mind to move to that second image. Sometimes, when I look at a Bible story I've read throughout the years, I have that same sense that what I am seeing is the most obvious lesson. But then there's something deeper, more interesting and probably more important, that is just out of my reach. If I stare at it, if I research it, if I pray about it, I hope that it will reveal itself to me. At first, when I read this conversation between Jesus and Peter, I see the intimacy of Jesus talking to a disciple who has had moments of absolute, deep and spiritual insights, as well as moments of poor choices and abysmal failures. In this conversation, as I see it, that most obvious lesson is that Jesus tells Peter, that his journey of faith and leadership is not done. Peter has much more to accomplish for himself, and for the faith.

## Rev. Daniel Miranda

What I wonder about this story is if what appears to be this, this moment of privacy between Jesus and Peter is really something bigger. It's something that we're supposed to follow. But what I've noticed that we have traditionally done is we center on Peter, or we talk about the story, as if, as if it only applies to the pastor. And, I wonder if we would see it differently if we could put ourselves in the middle of this story. And have those questions applied to us? Almost like we inserted ourselves into a frame.

## Rev. Sheila Miranda

What if we took Peter out of the equation? And make it a conversation between Jesus and us? Or what if the questions and the interactions are just between Jesus and you, or Jesus and me? I don't know about you. But that sounds really different to me. If I look at the story with these questions, as an observer who is simply studying Peter's interactions from a distance, it is much easier than if I place myself in Peter's spot. It connects me at a different level, if I am willing to picture myself in front of Jesus.

## Rev. Daniel Miranda

When we were looking at the Scripture, I remember you pointing something out that I hadn't paid attention to before. You reminded me that before the scripture that we read, something interesting happened. The disciples had gone fishing, and our Jesus had feathered disciples with those fish. So they had literally come together to be fed by Jesus. And it is out of that feeding that then all of these other questions come out. And it just makes so much more sense. Jesus has just fed this disciples, and after feeding them, he asked them three questions. The first is, do you love me? He asked that in a variety of ways. And then he says, Feed my sheep. And lastly, he tells them, follow me.

**Rev. Sheila Miranda**

If I jump into the story, and have food with Jesus, prepared by Jesus, and I sit with Jesus, and he asks me, do you love me? That feels different? It is my question to answer to own or disregard. The statement that follows is also mine to own, "Feed my sheep," he says. Now I have to think, what does that mean for me to feed the sheep? What I like about this? So what scares me about looking at it from this personal perspective? Is that it's no longer Peter's question. It is mine. And that makes it more difficult to skirt. Immediately, I think that of course, there are also times for learning and resting and re energizing. That's where I want to go. (Me too.) But the real question is still, what can I do to nurture others?

**Rev. Daniel Miranda**

I think all of us need to answer these questions. I know I do. Do I love Jesus? And if I do, what exactly does that mean? Do I love Jesus enough to feed the sheep, to care for others? Do I love Jesus enough to ask myself? What is my role? What are my gifts and graces? What are my skills? What am I supposed to do for my neighbor, for the community, for the church, for my family? I think that this approach can be really scary, because it takes it out of the perspective of there's a story about Peter. Rather, now it becomes a story about me, at the table with Jesus, answering the same three questions.

**Rev. Sheila Miranda**

Are we willing to follow? Are we willing to go where perhaps we hadn't thought of going before. We have this idea that if we journey with Jesus, Jesus in you, Jesus in me, Jesus and each one of us, we will move forward with curiosity, we will be willing to experiment with possibilities, we will allow the Spirit to lead us where we might not have gone along alone. And along the way, we will grow into new opportunities that we have not foreseen. And all the while, we can be assured that God's grace and love surrounds us.

**Rev. Daniel Miranda**

And one of the things that I love about the story is that we can end the with the same idea that Peter and Jesus had when they were interacting. I think Peter felt like he'd failed so many times, like he had made so many mistakes. Maybe he wasn't worthy. And Jesus tells him, the journey is not over, I still have things for you to do. And it's an invitation to journey to be curious to figure out what is there to do in church and community, in my neighborhood, how can I share the love of Jesus? And to understand that we don't do this alone, that we do it with the grace of God, and with God's strength guiding us.

**Rev. Sheila Miranda**

Let's pray together. God, thank you for this story. We are grateful for the example of Peter but I pray today that we would not rest in just seeing Peter in the story. May we open our eyes to the fact that you are with us, and you are asking us, to love You and to care for your people. That we would be individually responsive to answer the call to follow You. Lord, be with us. Quell our fears. May we be curious and adventuresome, as we journey with you to fulfill your charge to feed the sheep. In Christ's name, I pray

Amen.