

Dear Christian friends,

Bees pollinate. Birds migrate. Bears hibernate. Do you see where I'm going?

How about...the sun rises and sets. The tide comes in and goes out. The leaves bud, grow, turn color, and fall. Now do you see where I'm going?

Ok, how about...Vikings lose. Twins lose. Gopher Women's hockey wins. You're right. I'm talking about things that happen naturally. Bears naturally hibernate, the tide naturally comes in and goes out, and of course Gopher Women's hockey naturally wins, at one point winning 62 games in a row, and winning 4 out of the last 5 national championships.

Doing what comes naturally - that's what our text this morning is all about. It's about what Christians, Easter people, do naturally. People who believe in the resurrection just do what comes naturally, and that has everything to do with where new Christians come from. And as we consider our spiritual, natural action, please join me in prayer.

Last week in the Gospel reading the Easter story seemed to reach a perfect ending. Jesus appeared to his disciples— first without, then with, Thomas. He gave them the peace of forgiveness of all sins, the faith to believe it, and the power to forgive sins themselves. They've now seen Jesus; they know he's alive; even Thomas believes. And there has been that wonderful word to future generations: ***Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed (Jn 20:29)***. In last week's text John even wrote what seemed to be the perfect ending for his Gospel: ***Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name (Jn 20:30-31)***. Perfect conclusion, end of story.

But then, curiously enough, there's one more chapter in John's Gospel, our text today. At first glance it seems almost an

after-thought. But quite frankly, it is what comes...naturally. ***Afterward Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Tiberias. It happened this way: Simon Peter, Thomas (called Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. "I'm going out to fish," Simon Peter told them, and they said, "We'll go with you" (vv 1-3a)***.

Peter's a fisherman; that's what he does. At this point, the disciples don't know what Jesus' next instructions for them will be, so they do what comes naturally. Fishermen fish. Besides, it's against Peter's nature just to just sit around. He wants to be doing something.

You know what happens: ***They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus. He called out to them, "Friends, haven't you any fish?" "No," they answered. He said, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some." When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish (vv 3b-6)***.

This happened once before. Remember? In Luke 5, early in his ministry, Jesus enabled the disciples to catch a net full of fish. They'd fished all night and caught nothing; Jesus works a miracle, and they catch more than they can handle.

Last time, though, Peter reacted very differently than he does this time. Here's now: ***Then the disciple whom Jesus loved—that's John—said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, "It is the Lord," he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water. The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards (vv7-8)***. Remember what Peter said the last time Jesus enabled the disciples to make a great catch? He said, ***Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man! (Lk 5:8)***. That was the natural reaction of a man who had not yet seen the cross. Without the forgiveness of the cross,

we could never be in God's presence. In fact, we wouldn't want to be; by nature, we're enemies of God.

How different this time! Peter jumps into the water. He can't wait to be near Jesus. This is the natural reaction of those who have believed in the cross and resurrection. See, by this time, Easter has happened. Believing in the crucified and risen Christ creates a completely new nature. Now inside is a person who knows he's forgiven, loved by God. The new person inside knows he's going to be with God forever in heaven—and he can't wait. And because he knows and believes that, there's this whole new nature that's eager to do something for Christ.

So what's he going to do? What comes naturally? Do you recall the point of the story the last time Jesus enabled the disciples to catch all those fish? "***From now on,***" Jesus said, "***you will catch men***" (Lk 5:10) - fishers of men. Do you suppose the disciples thought back to that *this* time? Do you suppose we're supposed to think of it too?

This, it seems, is why the Holy Spirit inspired John to add ch 21 to his Gospel, why he records this particular miracle. It's not just another resurrection appearance of Jesus. It's an intentional reminder of what naturally follows after people have seen the risen Christ, believed in him, been empowered by him to forgive sins. And notice how John is doing it. Not by an imperative, a command—*You go do this!* But by a subtle, yet highly suggestive, story of a fishing trip.

You see, John knows we *want* to go and be fishers of men. It's what we naturally *want* to do. Christian men and women, boys and girls, just have this natural desire to make new Christians. We have tasted the joy of Easter. We have seen that our sins are all forgiven. We have the certainty of eternal life. And now we just naturally want everybody in the world to have the same things. Christians want to make new Christians...don't we?

Of course, it's not as if we necessarily sit down and decide just how many new Christians we want to make or

when we want to do it. It's not necessarily something we plan. It's whatever God has in mind.

No, Jesus is the one who plans and makes all this happen. The best-laid plans of men are meaningless. Just look at Peter, ***I'm going fishing***, but all night they catch nothing. Without Jesus, all our fishing for men is as fruitless. But then Jesus says, ***Throw your net on the right side of the boat***, and things go swimmingly. Jesus is the one who catches fish. In fact, Jesus does everything. ***When [the disciples] landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread...Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast."...Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish*** (vv 9, 12-13). Jesus feeds and equips us to do what the believer in us naturally wants to do.

And with Jesus empowering, fishermen catch fish, new Christians get made: ***Simon Peter climbed aboard and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn*** (v11). The disciples didn't plan to catch exactly 153 fish. (They couldn't catch even one on their own!) But planning how many fish we're going to catch isn't something we need to worry about, either. We just go about our business—fishing because we're fishermen, sharing Christ because we're Christians, people who ourselves are loved, forgiven, going to heaven—doing what comes naturally, naturally seizing the opportunities God presents: friends who come and tell us they're hurting; relatives we can invite to church; testifying to Christ by the way we just naturally go about lives as bank tellers and store clerks, students and electricians, kids, moms, dads; supporting, encouraging, inviting... We may not consider ourselves evangelists, but we all are—naturally.

Bees pollinate. The sun rises and sets. The Gophers win. And Christians, Easter people, naturally tell others about their Savior. For he is risen! He is risen indeed! Amen.

### ***5 Questions/Activities***

1. YouTube “Israel on a Drone – Sea of Galilee” to get a feel for the beauty and majesty of this lake which plays a large part in Jesus’ earthly ministry. List as many stories as you can that mention it.
2. The disciples were fishing as a way to keep busy while thinking about what had happened and what the future would hold. There they met Jesus. Discuss healthy activities you can do when you need similar time to think and ways in which you can “meet” Jesus during those times.
3. Read 1 Corinthians 1:26-29. Jesus had once used the disciples’ profession as a way to call them to follow him. Yet at the same time, he used their ordinary profession as an illustration of the extraordinary things he was calling them to do. Talk about how your role, job, a chore, or a daily activity can be an extraordinary opportunity to “follow” Jesus.
4. Doing what comes naturally to believing Christians, witnessing, can be daunting. Read 1 Peter 3:15. Choose one way in which you can witness today. Then, do it!
5. Jesus made the disciples breakfast, assuring them of his loving presence and all-surpassing power at work in their lives of witnessing. Share a personal witnessing experience (positive or negative) in which you have found assurance of the same.