May 5, 2019

Third Sunday of Easter

Acts 5:27-32, 40b-41; Ps 30:2, 4, 5-6, 11-12, 13; Rev 5:11-14; Jn 21:1-19

By Don Timmerman

It took a while for the Apostles to understand the Resurrection of Christ. They had a hard time recognizing Him when he appeared to them. Jesus appeared to them as a fisherman’s friend. He offered advice to them about where to toss the nets, and as a result they had plenty of fish caught. They recognized Christ by the kind actions shown to them. How do people begin to understand the Resurrected Christ? They understand Christ by seeing followers of Christ doing what Christ did, showing love and respect to all and loving their enemies. They rise above hatred, envy, selfishness, and retaliation. In today’s Gospel Christ asks his apostles if they love him. When they answer yes, He then tells them to feed their sheep. In other words, if you love you will provide for those in need.

Are we showing Christ to others? We have vigils at the ICE headquarters in Milwaukee every first Thursday of the month asking them to not separate families, release asylum seekers from detention and help them to understand that all people are God’s people. What we do to others we do also to Christ. We try to show the workers at ICE who the resurrected Christ is. We do this not just with our words, but also with our actions. We tell them that we are willing to give immigrants sanctuary, a place to live, food to eat and to not be afraid.

One of the first messages to the Apostles was “Do not be afraid.” Christ did not come to scare people or make their lives harder to live. He came to show us the way to happiness, salvation, by word and deed. The meaning of salvation is happiness. He told us to love all, friend and foe, to be merciful to all, forgive always, offer hospitality to the homeless, food for the hungry, freedom from slavery and oppression. His dying on the cross was a perfect example of His message. He did all of these things. He forgave his persecutors. He did not seek revenge or react with violence toward those killing him. He died a pauper giving up all He had with others. In other words, He rose above hatred, selfishness and retribution. He truly rose from the dead. He showed us a new way of life. He gave us a new vision of living. Let us rejoice and be glad for Christ indeed has risen!

Don Timmerman is a member of the Casa Maria Catholic Worker Community in Milwaukee, WI and a long-time peace activist.