

3rd Sunday in Easter (B)

04/19/2015

An elderly woman makes her living selling artificial fruit. One day a customer complains that the fruit she is selling isn't realistic enough. She points to an apple and says it is too red, too round and too big to be a real apple. The artificial fruit lady smiles and picks up the apple and proceeds to eat it.

It is not unusual that when we **first** begin to **learn** or **practice** something new, we tend to feel **artificial** and to **concentrate** on **individual** items and actions. We do this, for example, when we are **learning** a new subject in school, or **practicing** a new sport, painting, carpentry, and parenting. It is **rare** that we see the **connections** that are seen by people who have been **practicing** for a longer period of time.

This is one of the things, happening in our gospel story for **Luke**. The **disciples** are only beginning to **practice** a new way of life. **Jesus** introduces to them and models for them, **God** in a very **unfamiliar** way. He **connects suffering and death with love and life**. The **disciples** grasp **suffering and death**, and can't get **beyond** them. They, as a result, are **undone** by them. They don't grasp **love and life** - which is **new** to them - nor do they see the **connection**.

Suffering and death is **familiar** to most of us. We - usually - tend to **avoid** both as much as we can. They make us feel **unwelcomed** and possibly **rejected**. These are the **feelings** that the **disciples** seem to have as they **huddle** together in their **closed** room. They need the **reassurances** of **being with** others and the **protective walls** that enclose them.

We generally **experience** something similar by having people who **think** like us **with** us. They **reassure** us that our **point-of-view** is the **correct point-of-view**. We also **experience** the protective walls by

making **distinctions**. We **determine** in this way who are **welcomed** and who are **rejected**.

When **Jesus** - now **free** to **love** and **bursting** with **life** - comes to **visit** with them, the **disciples** are both **incredulous** and **giddy**. They, who have been **extremely depressed**, now are **extremely energized**. **Jesus** chooses an **ordinary and mundane** human action - **eating** - to help **calm** the **extremes** that they have been **experiencing**. Then he shows them the **connection** between **suffering and death** and **love and life**, his **wounds and scars**.

Apparently, it takes the **disciples** many **repeated meetings** with **Jesus** in which he **shows** them his **wounds and scars** and **eats** with them before they **experience** first, **love and life**, and then their **connection** with **suffering and death**. We call this the **Feast of Pentecost** in which the **disciples** too **know** the **union** that **Jesus the Christ** **knows** with **God**. They - to their surprise - stop **practicing** the **feeling** that they are **unwelcomed and rejected** by **God**, and begin **practicing** to **know** that the **God** is in **union** with us as **God** is in **union** with **Christ**. **Saint Paul** expresses this **knowing** as our **practicing** to **live in Christ** as his **body**.

Jesus comes to the **disciples** and to **us** with this **message**. We call it the **Easter message**. **God** makes **no one** feel **unwelcomed** nor does **God** **reject** anyone. **God** **welcomes and loves** each of us. **Practicing** to **live** the **Easter message** might feel **awkward** and **artificial** at first, and we most likely will need the **help** of others to **model practicing** the **Easter message** for us. **Time** is not an issue however, because another part of the **Easter message** is that we have **eternity** to continue our **practice**.