

Introduction

When I was ordained a Priest, Sat. June 10th 1972, the next day Sunday, I said my First Mass, as a newly ordained priest. I chose today's gospel reading, for my first mass.

I did so, because I find Peter so loveable and relatable as I see him portrayed in today's gospel. Peter comes across as impetuous and somewhat prone to inserting his foot in his mouth.

But the upside of that is this: Peter is free of pretense in this. With him I always know exactly what he is thinking and feeling at any given moment. And I think Jesus loved that in Peter.

Perhaps, more importantly, Peter is all passion, all heart. I can't help smiling at his response in today's gospel, "when the disciple whom Jesus loved," recognizes the mystery man on the beach as "the Lord". – Peter is wearing only a loincloth at the time, which is appropriate for the hot heavy labor of fishing. But when Peter understands that it is Jesus, he can only think of getting to his teacher and friend as soon as possible.-So

he puts on his outer garment, jumps overboard and swims as fast as he can to the shore.

I like to think that Peter, ever himself, is just so excited , that he can't think straight.—In fact I envision Peter sloshing out of the water like a big wet St Bernard dog and sweeping Jesus up in a big bear hug that leaves both of them dripping wet.

This is the new fearless Peter ,-- the one who no longer feels a need to hide from possible persecution , the one who boldly defies the Sanhedrin , the government of Israel at the time, telling its members” We must obey God rather than human beings “.

This is Peter transformed by his teacher's resurrection and empowered by the Spirit.

This is also Peter who has no doubts about the depths of his love for Jesus, whatever it costs him.

No wonder Jesus leaves Peter in charge of his fledging church .The Master knows that this Peter will follow Jesus to the end and faithfully will feed his Master's sheep. And I am called to follow Peter, to be my messy self,- but redeemed and loved into life.

AMEN.