

## Easter 3 2022

I can't believe it is May Day already! In my last Parish, the choir used to climb to the top of the Church tower (after our 8am Eucharist) and sing May Carols. The Wardens got very fidgety about health and safety issues, I recall, but it has been carrying on for more years than anyone can remember.

These carols were mainly about the joy of this Easter Season and had a lovely folk feel about them as if they could be sung equally well in the pub or village hall. They probably were. And most of all they conjure up happy memories, concentrating on community occasions that really help to unite different personalities, to relax and sing and share food, to let go a little – something the British are not universally good at! That said I came across this lovely book recently in a second hand bookshop 'Irish Writers on Art' and came across a delightful essay by Jennifer Johnston 'Le Dejeuner' as she reflects on the paintings of Pierre Bonnard.

If I may quote her last paragraph:

"The first of Bonnard's paintings that I met (I do meet paintings that I like a lot and we speak silently to each other) was of the end of a meal - a long table, scattered dishes and people, empty bottles, a languid air, summer sun and behind a yellow house rises up. No Muscovy ducks to be seen but it was indubitably Rockbrook. I have loved this painter ever since; no posing in his paintings, things are rumpled, intimate, and the light is real and the food is good and the chat has been good. There is nothing false. The goodwill is enormous.

Perhaps that is why I enjoy my conversations with Bonnard's paintings so much."

Let me show you just this one...

Now I mention all this, of course, because of today's most evocative and atmospheric setting of this unforgettable 'le petit déjeuner' – when the Risen Christ hosts breakfast for his disciples by the lakeside. Immediately, in that moment of recognition, their hearts and minds were taken back to the Upper Room before he died. But instead of the uncertainty and fears of that Last Supper, today's Gospel has that special 'eureka' moment when they know what Jesus is saying and doing. The writer paints a scene of familiarity – the fishing and the call to discipleship and, somehow, it all makes sense now: the taking, the giving and the serving. And the intimacy is there too of the kind you usually find around the family table – which is why the altar (the place of sacrifice and nourishment) is at the centre of our focus here in church or at least, should be.

As many of you know, I would like the priest who presides, to be closer to you and not further away because that's the normal and familiar way of sharing food and tasting God's love for each of us. The Risen Lord is in our midst and is glad for our closer company and fellowship.

But John doesn't just leave it there by saying how replete and full we are, or how satisfied we may feel. Like the best of family tables, after the meal, there is conversation, debate, and often disagreement or heartache. Simon is put to the test

in such a deliberately searching and testing Trinitarian way that his cheeks must have gone bright red with embarrassment. We never see that detail but we can still feel the emotion of it all: “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.”

And it is that confession and cry of honesty which Jesus demands of all of us without any hint of sentimentality. We are being told that there is pastoral work to be done, “Feed my sheep.” We can’t just sit around the table all day or lie on the beach all day. We need to care and provide and encourage and build up community where we are; and we need to listen and continue to learn from our Rabbi’s teaching and live by it, to the very best of our ability.

On Friday night’s fascinating German evening, several people referred to that country's take on humour but I am not convinced that humour only has national characteristics. I want to end where I began, that this season of Eastertide is something to sing about across the world and across every valley and every border. Christ is risen from the dead, so let all our Alleluias ring out hopefully and joyfully. Even death is defeated and, for ever.

AMEN.