

Reflection Sunday 1st May

John 21:15-19

15 When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?' He said to him, 'Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed my lambs.'¹⁶ A second time he said to him, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' He said to him, 'Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Tend my sheep.'¹⁷ He said to him the third time, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, 'Do you love me?' And he said to him, 'Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed my sheep.'¹⁸ Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go.'¹⁹ (He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, 'Follow me.'

When I was in college one of the tutors would occasionally say to a student entering morning prayers, "My study after breakfast." It never happened to me as the particular tutor was never my personal tutor. I always wondered what went through the student's mind during prayers and breakfast.

Was it like being sent to the head teacher when we were in school resulting in trepidation?

I wonder what Simon Peter thought as Jesus started to speak to him? Did he take him to one side? Was it significant that Jesus called him Simon and not Peter? Was it like your mother using your full name, meaning you were in trouble? We can only speculate.

What John's record of this event indicates is that either it was a public event or that Peter spoke to John about it afterwards.

Jesus challenged Simon Peter to think about his relationship with Jesus, what was of priority in Peter's life. The same question was asked, twice more, though the third time a different, less powerful, word for love was used. (Is this what upset Peter or is it that the third question reminds Peter of the three denials?) At the end there is seen to have been forgiveness, restoration, commissioning and invitation. The invitation to Peter was the same as where it all began three years earlier by a lakeside- "Follow me."

The years may have gone by, experiences shared, lessons learned, tasks done and there is work to be done, yet the invitation is still the same, "follow me."

For each of us that is the same. It is all about following Jesus. Do we, at times, feel we have learnt a lot and we can go off and do things our way? The daily invitation is simple - Follow me.

To be following means the one in front arrives first, ahead of you, aware of what it is in front of you. Jesus never leads us into what he knows nothing about. To follow is always the safer thing to do.