



The Cathedral of St. Andrew - Honolulu

Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost, September 8, 2019: The Papio at Camp Mokuleia

Several years ago I spent three days at a clergy retreat at Camp Mokuleia on the North Shore and on Day Two of the retreat we had some sabbath time, and so I sat on a chair with my feet on the rock wall of the camp to take a break, and I got to watch two young men who were fishing with rod and reel from the shoreline.

The cast their lines into the water and began to reel them back in, and more than half the time they'd find that papio had taken the bait.

I'm sure those poor fish felt like they had taken up their crosses as they were being pulled to shore on hooks and then taken out of the water where they flopped about and gasped for the water that'd oxygenate their gills. And they were being taken in a direction that they definitely didn't wanna go. Life is like that, isn't it?

But then what was so surprising to me was that those fishermen took photos of the fish after they took them off the hooks, holding them up for the camera – and then released them back into the water, and the papio swam quickly away.

And up until that point those fishermen were focused on their possession – those beautiful papio that'd be the envy of their friends, no doubt. They focused on the fish as they grabbed the bait and they reeled them in. They focused on the fish as they took them off the hooks. They focused on the fish when they took their photographs. They focused on the fish when they released them back into the water so that they could swim back out to sea.

But after that, after they watched the fish swim away; they paused and looked out on the vastness of the ocean. They looked up at the clouds on the horizon. They looked up at the birds in the sky. They looked upon at the waves as they lapped over the coral reef.

Because they let go of those fish, they got to take in a great and vast vision and the gift of knowing their part in Creation and in the Kingdom of God.

I think we tend to think of crosses that we bear as burdens. And while that can be true, I think crosses can also be symbols to us of possibilities—resurrections into new ways of life. Who'd've ever thought those fish'd go free? I bet those papio never thought of that possibility, but then they got to swim into the vastness of second chances the way we get to swim into the vastness of second chances because of the redemption made manifest to us after the crucifixion and at the resurrection of Christ from the tomb.

And when we're called to give up our possessions the way Jesus says in the Gospel this morning, I think we think of that as sacrifice. And while that's correct, I think it'd also be interesting to think of that as a reward.

Those fishermen took in the reward of that beautiful vista after they let their fish go.

Fr. Moki, September 1, 2019, cont'd.

What are our rewards when we let things go?

You know, I was with you for three years as your Canon Pastor before I went to Hilo. And this time round I've been with you almost three years as your Priest-in-Charge. That's a twelve-year span (almost a quarter of my life) where I've gotten a spiritual directors license, taken a sabbatical, completed a capital campaign, been President of the Standing Committee, led retreats in the Philippines and here at home, worked with you, the Bishop, and the staff to make a go of this Cathedral as a vital and vibrant congregation.

And I'm at a place in my life together with you where I continue to looking toward possibilities, to hopes, to dreams. I never, ever (after all) thought I'd be back at the Cathedral when I left Honolulu to go to Hilo in 2011. And if that's possible, what else is possible? What else might we hope for? What other things might we dare to dream?

But in order to get to this place, I had to give up not only my life in Hilo, but also my weekly visits with my grandmother, being with family and friends, the Big Island beauty found in Mauna Kea, the volcano, the cliff lines of the Hamakua Coast.

That was a real sacrifice for me. And I never, ever imagined the reward would be this great. After all, I got to come back to be with all of you, the people I've always loved and that I didn't want to leave.

So I hope the take-away from all this is that we make the decision to believe in possibilities, possibilities made manifest because Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene in the garden after he was placed in the tomb. That's what makes us Christians – being an Easter faith and a people of hope.

Those fish on the North Shore of Oahu thought they were dead. But because of compassion, they were set free into a vastness that seemed impossible to them when they were being reeled in by those fishermen onto that Mokuleia shore.

That kind of hope is there for you and me as well.

And so we have to pray that at some point, God will reveal to us what that hope and what that promise might be—all the while believing, making the choice to believe, that it will be great, that it will be wonderful and that it will be beyond our wildest dreams.

Amen.