

Are you more like Peter or the beloved disciple? I am not talking about your luck fishing, coming-up with nothing like Peter did that night. No, I am talking about your ability to recognize Jesus in others and throughout your daily routine.

No fish stories, but I must start off with a confession, I ran a red light. A couple of weeks ago I got a call just before I left the office for an appointment. I was already running late and should have not have answered a phone call; but I did. The call was about a very serious matter that totally consumed me; one where my anxiety level really increased. I know... for by the time I got off the call by lower back was aching, a telltale sign for me that the issue was really eating away at me. I completed the call, got in my car and set off to my meeting. All I could think about was that call, what action I should take. My mind focused intensely on the issue. I drove through the tunnel under Addison Airport and stopped at the light at Midway Road. The car in front of me turned to the right. I continued to move across the intersection when half way across I looked up and noticed the light was red, not green. The car in front of me took a free right on red; I just went on through. My guardian angel was definitely with me that day, for I passed safely through the intersection without incident. I immediately turned into a parking lot, stopped, and cleared my head becoming more focused before driving any further.

This was an instance where, without realizing it, I put my life on autopilot not recognizing the warning signs and critical things that were going on around me. I was thinking, but not about the right things, focused on stuff that, at the time, really didn't matter. I was physically present but unaware of the situation and happenings around me... If we don't recognize these situations in our physical environment how much more difficult is it to recognize God's influence on our lives in those spiritual things around us that are evident in much more subtle ways.

Let's look a little closer at Peter. Since Jesus' crucifixion Peter was; there at the empty tomb, encountered Jesus when he appeared behind locked doors, and was commissioned with the other disciples. He has experienced the risen Jesus and received the Holy Spirit yet he regresses back into his old familiar ways, focusing on fishing. But Jesus persists... encountering Peter again in Peter's daily routine... It is very early in the morning after a long night of fishing. Jesus is there but the disciples don't at first recognize him. Peter doesn't recognize him from a distance maybe because of the dim morning light. He still doesn't recognize Jesus when Jesus tenderly addresses them; "children."¹ However the disciples in the boat obey that man ashore; lowering their nets to the right side of the boat although they have caught nothing all night long. They are intensely focused on their work; what was immediate, familiar, and routine. Then Peter experiences a miracle, catching a large number of fish; he still doesn't recognize Jesus. It takes the beloved disciple to recognize Jesus and he tells Peter, "...It is the Lord..."² Finally, Peter drops what he is doing, straightens himself out, and impulsively jumps into the sea not wanting to further delay his encounter Jesus.

¹ Jn 21:5

² Jn 21:7

Today our Gospel shares a story where God continues to seek us out even when we have not recognized him or have knowingly rejected and turned away. For as many times as we reject him, Jesus gives us equal opportunity to rededicate our lives to him and accept his mission. He calls us in our daily activities; sending us signals to get our attention and break the routine.

For myself I get so busy with life that I often fail to see the presence of God. I submit, you may do very much the same. So how can we be more like the beloved disciple, shedding off our preoccupation with things or routines; being able to recognize God and his true presence among us, seeing the action taken by him in our lives?

Brother Lawrence, a 17 century Carmelite friar, shares how he developed that simple awareness in his writings published in the book "The Practice of the Presence of God". There is not enough time to address all the ways he tells us how to recognize God in our life; I will leave that up to you to investigate. But, in brief, there are some simple concepts we could employ. Brother Lawrence writes;

"He (God that is) does not ask much of us, merely a thought of Him from time to time, a little act of adoration, sometimes to ask for His grace, sometimes to offer Him your sufferings, at other times to thank Him for the graces, past and present, He has bestowed on you ... in the midst of your troubles to take solace in Him as often as you can. Lift up your heart to Him during your meals and in company; the least little remembrance will always be the most pleasing to Him. One need not cry out very loudly; He is nearer to us than we think."³

Perhaps, to grow closer to God and recognize God as the beloved disciple did we should follow Brother Lawrence's simple, humble way to recognize and acknowledge God in our daily lives, following him. Just frequently taking the time to briefly think about God, not just after we experience a blessing or when need something, but as we go through our daily routine.

So now let us be like the disciples when they saw the charcoal fire, bread, and fish; without question recognizing Jesus. We too should recognize his presence in the Eucharistic Feast, the one all here will participate in as we continue the Mass.

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³ <https://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/2133549-the-practice-of-the-presence-of-god>