



WEEKLY GOSPEL REFLECTION



3rd Sunday of Easter, Cycle C

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And Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." John 21:19

This post-resurrection appearance of Jesus is appropriately placed in the final chapter of John's Gospel. Scholars believe it comes from an independent recording of appearances in Galilee. The disciples have gone back to their secular occupations and, like other Resurrection accounts, they do not recognize Jesus at first. The last time Jesus visited the Sea of Tiberius was when he fed the disciples and large crowd with "five loaves and two fish" (John 6:1-14) Few present at that time had understood that Jesus was giving himself to them through the bread and the fish, showing himself as the abundant source of spiritual life. In today's Gospel Jesus once again, on the shore of the Sea of Tiberius, feeds the disciples with bread and fish and offers himself. At this appearance His revelation is more fully received.

With the wondrous catch of fish and then the picturesque meal on the dawn's sea shore, this appearance account reminds us of Luke 5:4, where Jesus said to Simon, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch." Catching fish from the chaos of the deep is symbolic of bringing unconscious spiritual depths into the light of awareness. Fishing is symbolic of the heart and mind of missionary activity of the early Church. Jesus called fishermen to leave their lives behind so they might catch a different type of fish – to become fishers of people. John's Gospel goes deeper today with the commissioning of Peter to lead His nascent Church. Saint Jerome (b.347) wrote that the number of fish caught, 153, was the number of all the kinds of fish in the world noting the universality of the church's mission.

As you reflect on the fishing scene, consider the breath-taking sense of the awe that the apostles experienced. Consider that the fish just caught are not used for this meal; the meal was prepared beforehand. The fish represent those brought to faith and are invited to share the Eucharist meal with Christ.

Following the meal, Jesus offers Peter, Leader and guardian of the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, three opportunities to profess his love, reversing the triple downward spiral of death caused by his denial of Jesus during the Passion. Thrice Peter now professes his love in an ascending spiral of grace, as the Lord blesses him with an instruction to care for His flock. Then Jesus foretells of Peter's eventual martyrdom and calls him, as he did years earlier, to follow him all the way to the end.

We should reflect this week on the intimate exchange between Jesus and Peter. As Christians, we consider our own response to Jesus' questions, each drawing us to a deepening wisdom of the mercy of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the life he gave for his friends. Through this reflection may we be renewed in youthfulness of spirit as we rejoice in the restored glory of our adoption. And may we, in wonder and awe, join the River of Life as we rejoice in this Easter Celebration of Resurrection.

"Follow me," the eternal injunction given to us all.

A reading from the holy gospel according to John.

Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias;
and he showed himself in this way.

Gathered there together were Simon Peter,
Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others
of his disciples. Simon Peter said to them, *"I am going fishing."*
They said to him, *"We will go with you."*
They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach;
but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus.
Jesus said to them, *"Children, you have no fish, have you?"*
They answered him, *"No."*

He said to them, *"Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some."*
So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish.
That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, *"It is the Lord!"*
When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on some clothes, for he was naked,
and jumped into the sea.

But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish,
for they were not far from the land, only about ninety meters off.
When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread.
Jesus said to them, *"Bring some of the fish that you have just caught."*
So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore,
full of large fish, a hundred fifty-three of them;
and though there were so many, the net was not torn.

Jesus said to them, *"Come and have breakfast."*
None of the disciples dared to ask him, *"Who are you?"* because they knew it was the Lord.
Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish.
This was the third time that Jesus appeared after he was raised from the dead.

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter,
"Simon son of John, do you love me more than these!"
Peter said to him, *"Yes, Lord; you know that I love you."*
Jesus said to him, *"Feed my lambs."*

A second time he said to him, *"Simon son of John, do you love me?"*
Peter said to him, *"Yes, Lord; you know that I love you."*
Jesus said to him, *"Tend my sheep."*

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. Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger,
you used to fasten your own belt and 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."*
He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.
After this he said to him, *"Follow me."*

The Gospel of the Lord