

LIVING THE GOSPEL
THE THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER – Apr 18, 2010



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Theme: "Take care of my sheep. ... Follow me!"

Gathering Prayer

All: Father in heaven, author of all truth, a people once in darkness has listened to your Word and followed your Son as he rose from the tomb. Hear the prayer of this newborn people and strengthen your Church to answer your call. May we rise and come forth into the light of day to stand in your presence until eternity dawns. We ask this through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Exploring the Word

Gospel Reading: John 21:1-19

¹Afterward Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Tiberias. It happened this way: ²Simon Peter, Thomas (called Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. ³"I'm going out to fish," Simon Peter told them, and they said, "We'll go with you." So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

⁴Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus.

⁵He called out to them, "Friends, haven't you any fish?" "No," they answered.

⁶He said, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some." When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish.

⁷Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, "It is the Lord," he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water. ⁸The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards. ⁹When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread.

Saturday 10am - 12pm at Church of The Holy Cross (room #03-06)

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The Navarre Bible – Commentaries;
Living Liturgy – Liturgical Ministry, The Liturgical Press;
Emmaus Journey – www.emmausjourney.org

¹⁰Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish you have just caught."

¹¹Simon Peter climbed aboard and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn. ¹²Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." None of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. ¹³Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. ¹⁴This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.

¹⁵When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Feed my lambs."

¹⁶Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me?"

He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep."

¹⁷ The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Feed my sheep. ¹⁸ I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." ¹⁹Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, "Follow me!"

Gospel Notes

1-3. There are some very significant things in this account: we find the disciples "by the Sea of Tiberias", which means they have done what the risen Christ had told them to do (cf. Mt 28:7); they are together, which shows that there is close fraternity among them; Peter takes the initiative, which in a way shows his authority; for our Lord to give them new instructions.

This episode is reminiscent of the first miraculous draught of fish (cf. Lk 5:1-11), where our Lord promised Peter he would make him a fisher of men; now he is going to confirm him in his mission as visible head of the Church.

4-8. The risen Jesus goes in search of his disciples, to encourage them and tell them more about the great mission he has entrusted to them.

Closing Prayer

All: Shepherd God, you care for each of us with love and compassion. Be with us in all the frustrations of life, and help us to hear your commands to follow you more closely. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Leader: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life.

All: Amen

faithful encounters the risen Lord who invites them to his banquet(Cf. Jn 21:12; Lk 24:30)

The Lord's day, the day of Resurrection, the day of Christians, is our day. It is called the Lord's day because on it the Lord rose victorious to the Father. If pagans call it the "day of the sun," we willingly agree, for today the light of the world is raised, today is revealed the sun of justice with healing in his rays.(St. Jerome, Pasch.: CCL 78, 550)

1429 St. Peter's conversion after he had denied his master three times bears witness to this. Jesus' look of infinite mercy drew tears of repentance from Peter and, after the Lord's resurrection, a threefold affirmation of love for him.(Cf. Lk 22:61; Jn 21:15-17) The second conversion also has a *communitarian* dimension, as is clear in the Lord's call to a whole Church: "Repent!"(Rev 2:5, 16)

St. Ambrose says of the two conversions that, in the Church, "there are water and tears: the water of Baptism and the tears of repentance."(St. Ambrose, ep. 41, 12: PL 16, 1116)

1551 This priesthood is ministerial. "That office . . . which the Lord committed to the pastors of his people, is in the strict sense of the term a *service*."(LG 24) It is entirely related to Christ and to men. It depends entirely on Christ and on his unique priesthood; it has been instituted for the good of men and the communion of the Church. The sacrament of Holy Orders communicates a "sacred power" which is none other than that of Christ. The exercise of this authority must therefore be measured against the model of Christ, who by love made himself the least and the servant of all.(Cf. Mk 10:43-45; 1 Pet 5:3) "The Lord said clearly that concern for his flock was proof of love for him."(St. John Chrysostom, *De sac. 2*, 4:PG 48, 636; cf. Jn 21:15-17)

Sharing and Discussion

1. How has Jesus proven his power and authority to you?
2. What lessons does this passage teach about dealing with people's failures?
3. What do you think was the motive that led Peter to a lifetime of service to Christ?

This account describes a very moving scene, our Lord together with his own: "He passes by, close to his Apostles, close to those souls who have given themselves to him, and they do not realize he is there. How often Christ is not only near us, but in us; yet we still live in such a human way!...They, the disciples, recall what they have heard so often from their Master's lips: fishers of men, apostles. And they realize that all things are possible, because it is he who is directing their fishing.

"Whereupon 'the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter. It is the Lord! Love, love is farsighted. Love is the first to appreciate kindness. The adolescent Apostle, who felt a deep and firm affection for Jesus, because he loved Christ with all the purity and tenderness of a heart that had never been corrupted, exclaimed: 'It is the Lord!'

"When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his clothes and sprang into the sea.' Peter personifies faith. Full of marvelous daring, he leaps into the sea. With a love like John's and a faith like Peter's, what is there that can stop us?" (J. Escriva, *Friends of God*, 265-266)

9-14. We can sense here the deep impression this appearance of the risen Jesus must have made on the Apostles, and how sweet a memory St John kept of it. After his resurrection Jesus showed the same tenderness as characterized his public ministry. He makes use of natural things—the fire, the fish, etc—to show that he really is there, and he maintains the familiar tone typical of when he lived with the disciples.

The Fathers and Doctors of the Church have often dwelt on the mystical meaning of this episode: the boat is the Church, whose unity is symbolized by the net which is not torn; the sea is the world, Peter in the boat stands for supreme authority of the Church, and the number of fish signifies the number of the elect (cf. St Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on St John, in loc*).

15-17. Jesus Christ had promised Peter that he would be the primate of the Church (cf. Mt.16: 16-19). Despite his three denials during our Lord's passion, Christ now confers on him the primacy he promised.

"Jesus questions Peter, three times, as if to give him a triple chance to atone for his triple denial. Peter has learned his lesson from the bitter experience of his wretchedness. Aware of his weakness, he is deeply convinced that rash claims are pointless. Instead he puts everything in Christ's hands. 'Lord, you know well that I love you'"

(J.Escriva, *Friends of God*, 267). The primacy was given to Peter directly and immediately. So the Church has always understood-and so Vatican I defined: "We therefore teach and declare that, according to the testimony of the Gospel, the primacy of jurisdiction over the universal Church of God was immediately and directly promised and given to Blessed Peter the Apostle by Christ our Lord. [...] And it was upon Simon Peter alone that Jesus after his resurrection bestowed the jurisdiction of chief pastor and ruler over all his fold in the words: "Feed my lambs; feed my sheep"" (*Pastor aeternus*, chap. 1)

The primacy is a grace conferred on Peter and his successors, the popes; it is one of the basic elements in the Church, designed to guard and protect its unity: "In order that the episcopate also might be one and undivided, and that [...] the multitude of the faithful might be kept secure in the oneness of faith and communion, he set Blessed Peter over the rest of the Apostles, and fixed in him the abiding principles of this twofold unity, and its visible foundation" (*Pastor aeternus*, Dz-Sch 3051; cf Vatican II, *Lumen gentium*, 18). Therefore, the primacy of Peter is perpetuated in each of his successors: this is something, which Christ disposed: it is not based on human legislation or custom.

By virtue of the primacy, Peter, and each of his successors, is the shepherd of the whole Church and Vicar of Christ on earth, because he exercises vicariously Christ's own authority. Love for the Pope, whom St Catherine of Siena used to call "the sweet Christ on earth, should express itself in prayer, sacrifice and obedience.

18-19. According to Tradition, St Peter followed his Master to the point of dying by crucifixion, head downwards, "Peter and Paul suffered martyrdom in Rome during Nero's persecution of Christians, which took place between the years 64 and 68. St Clement, the successor of the same Peter in the see of the Church of Rome, recalls this when, writing to the Corinthians, he puts before them 'the generous example of these two athletes': due to jealousy and envy, those who were principal and holiest columns suffered persecution and fought the fight unto death"" (*Paul VI Petrum et Paulum*).

"Follow me!": these words would have reminded the Apostles of the first call he received (cf. MT 4:19) and of the fact that Christ requires of his disciples complete self-surrender: "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his Cross daily and follow me" (Lk 9:23). St Peter himself, in one of his letters, also testifies to the Cross being something all Christians must carry: "For to this you have been

by the new and supernatural properties it subsequently and permanently enjoys.(Cf Lk 24:31; Jn 20:19, 26) But during the forty days when he eats and drinks familiarly with his disciples and teaches them about the kingdom, his glory remains veiled under the appearance of ordinary humanity.(Cf. Acts 1:3; 10:41; Mk 16:12; Lk 24:15; Jn 20:14-15; 21:4) Jesus' final apparition ends with the irreversible entry of his humanity into divine glory, symbolized by the cloud and by heaven, where he is seated from that time forward at God's right hand.(Cf. Acts 1:9; 2:33; 7:56; Lk 9:34-35; 24:51; Ex 13:22; Mk 16:19; Ps 110:1) Only in a wholly exceptional and unique way would Jesus show himself to Paul "as to one untimely born", in a last apparition that established him as an apostle.(1 Cor 15:8; cf. 9:1; Gal 1:16)

880 When Christ instituted the Twelve, "he constituted [them] in the form of a college or permanent assembly, at the head of which he placed Peter, chosen from among them."(LG 19; cf. Lk 6:13; Jn 21:15-17) Just as "by the Lord's institution, St. Peter and the rest of the apostles constitute a single apostolic college, so in like fashion the Roman Pontiff, Peter's successor, and the bishops, the successors of the apostles, are related with and united to one another."(LG 22; cf. CIC, can. 330)

881 The Lord made Simon alone, whom he named Peter, the "rock" of his Church. He gave him the keys of his Church and instituted him shepherd of the whole flock.(Cf. Mt 16:18-19; Jn 21:15-17) "The office of binding and loosing which was given to Peter was also assigned to the college of apostles united to its head."(LG 22 # 2) This pastoral office of Peter and the other apostles belongs to the Church's very foundation and is continued by the bishops under the primacy of the Pope.

1166 "By a tradition handed down from the apostles which took its origin from the very day of Christ's Resurrection, the Church celebrates the Paschal mystery every seventh day, which day is appropriately called the Lord's Day or Sunday."(SC 106) The day of Christ's Resurrection is both the first day of the week, the memorial of the first day of creation, and the "eighth day," on which Christ after his "rest" on the great sabbath inaugurates the "day that the Lord has made," the "day that knows no evening."(Byzantine liturgy) The Lord's Supper is its center, for there the whole community of the

my sheep."(Jn 21:15-17; cf. 10:11) The power to "bind and loose" connotes the authority to absolve sins, to pronounce doctrinal judgments, and to make disciplinary decisions in the Church. Jesus entrusted this authority to the Church through the ministry of the apostles (Cf. Mt 18:18.) and in particular through the ministry of Peter, the only one to whom he specifically entrusted the keys of the kingdom.

618 The cross is the unique sacrifice of Christ, the "one mediator between God and men".(1 Tim 2:5) But because in his incarnate divine person he has in some way united himself to every man, "the possibility of being made partners, in a way known to God, in the paschal mystery" is offered to all men.(GS 22 # 5; cf. # 2) He calls his disciples to "take up [their] cross and follow [him]",(Mt 16:24) for "Christ also suffered for [us], leaving [us] an example so that [we] should follow in his steps."(1 Pt 2:21) In fact Jesus desires to associate with his redeeming sacrifice those who were to be its first beneficiaries.(Cf Mk 10:39; Jn 21:18-19; Col 1:24) This is achieved supremely in the case of his mother, who was associated more intimately than any other person in the mystery of his redemptive suffering.(Cf. Lk 2:35)

Apart from the cross there is no other ladder by which we may get to heaven.(St. Rose of Lima: cf. P. Hansen, *Vita mirabilis* (Louvain, 1668).)

645 By means of touch and the sharing of a meal, the risen Jesus establishes direct contact with his disciples. He invites them in this way to recognize that he is not a ghost and above all to verify that the risen body in which he appears to them is the same body that had been tortured and crucified, for it still bears the traces of his Passion.(Cf. Lk 24:30,39-40, 41-43; Jn 20:20, 27; 21:9,13-15) Yet at the same time this authentic, real body possesses the new properties of a glorious body: not limited by space and time but able to be present how and when he wills; for Christ's humanity can no longer be confined to earth, and belongs henceforth only to the Father's divine realm.(Cf. Mt 28:9, 16-17; Lk 24:15, 36; Jn 20:14, 17, 19, 26; 21:4) For this reason too the risen Jesus enjoys the sovereign freedom of appearing as he wishes: in the guise of a gardener or in other forms familiar to his disciples, precisely to awaken their faith.(Cf. Mk 16:12; Jn 20:14-16; 21:4, 7)

659 "So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God."(Mk 16:19) Christ's body was glorified at the moment of his Resurrection, as proved

called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps" (1 Pet 2:21).

Gospel Reflection

Children are wonderful, complete human beings who never cease to delight us with their antics and frustrate us with their immaturity. All societies have exacting laws that protect children, not only because they are unable to do so themselves, but also because children are our future. They are our progeny. Good parents spend years guiding and teaching their children. Parents never cease to be parents—they can always lend one more helping hand, lead children to ever greater growth, help them always learn, bring them to the realization of new possibilities. In this Sunday's gospel Jesus addresses the adult, capable, fishermen disciples as "children." The appearance of the risen Jesus to them on the seashore is a presence bringing new life, challenging them to growth. Easter life is a constant invitation to growth, a constant opening to God's unexpected gifts of abundance, a constant invitation to faithful response, which in itself is growth leading to new life. These "children" disciples yet need to grow.

It would seem as though the disciples are still missing the point of the resurrection and how it changes one's life, because Peter and several other disciples revert to what is familiar—they go fishing. On their own they catch nothing. It is only in response to Jesus' command from the seashore that they cast their nets and pull in a great catch.

The two scenes in the gospel capture two different but interrelated aspects of the Easter mystery. The first scene (miraculous catch of fish) dramatizes what God gives us—abundance of new life. The second scene (encounter between Jesus and Peter) dramatizes our response—love that overflows in faithfully following the risen Christ even to the point of death. We can give our lives because we have first been given life by God. While discipleship is demanding, God always gives us what we need, is always there to nourish and encourage us. True, following Jesus isn't easy; it means that we must be willing to sacrifice ourselves—even to the point of death—for the sake of our beloved. At the same time, this dying to self is the only way to share in the abundance of new life Jesus offers us. Three times Jesus asks Peter if he loves him and three times Peter responds, "you know that I love you." But Peter is yet to find out that following Jesus always leads to death.

We share in the abundance of the fruit of this new life when we follow Jesus' commands. We share in new life only if we are willing to share in

its cost: following Jesus even to death—dying to self. Heeding Jesus' call and sharing in risen life means that our own love must be so great that we feed and care for Jesus' flock, glorify God by dying to self, and all this because we choose to follow Jesus.

Living the Paschal Mystery

Risen life has its demands—but Jesus gives us all we need in terms of abundance and nourishment in order to meet those demands. The incredible thing about our God is that God provides us with all we need, beginning with offering us new life. Accepting the abundance that God offers means that by following Jesus we ourselves become Jesus' risen presence, those who lead others to him. Every day we must take care that our actions announce God's blessings at the same time that they speak of God's goodness and care. Leading others to Jesus doesn't mean doing big things; it means doing the little things well and so reflecting the new Life dwelling within us.

New Testament links

First Reading — Acts 5:27-32, 40-41

²⁷ And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest questioned them, ²⁸ saying, "We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and you intend to bring this man's blood upon us." ²⁹ But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men. ³⁰ The God of our fathers raised Jesus whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. ³¹ God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. ³² And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him."...

⁴⁰ So they took his advice, and when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. ⁴¹ Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name.

Responsorial Reading — Psalm 30:1-2, 4-6

¹ I will extol thee, O LORD, for thou hast drawn me up, and hast not let my foes rejoice over me. ² O LORD my God, I cried to thee for help, and thou hast healed me

⁴ Sing praises to the LORD, O you his saints, and give thanks to his holy name. ⁵ For his anger is but for a moment, and his favor is for a lifetime. Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning. ⁶ As for me, I said in my prosperity, "I shall never be moved."

Second Reading — Revelation 5:11-14

¹¹ Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, ¹² saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!" ¹³ And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all therein, saying, "To him who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might for ever and ever!" ¹⁴ And the four living creatures said, "Amen!" and the elders fell down and worshiped.

Catechism of The Catholic Church

448 Very often in the Gospels people address Jesus as "Lord". This title testifies to the respect and trust of those who approach him for help and healing. (Cf Mt 8:2; 14:30; 15:22; et al) At the prompting of the Holy Spirit, "Lord" expresses the recognition of the divine mystery of Jesus. (Cf. Lk 1:43; 2:11) In the encounter with the risen Jesus, this title becomes adoration: "My Lord and my God!" It thus takes on a connotation of love and affection that remains proper to the Christian tradition: "It is the Lord!" (Jn 20:28,21:7)

553 - Jesus entrusted a specific authority to Peter: "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." (Mt 16:19) The "power of the keys" designates authority to govern the house of God, which is the Church. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, confirmed this mandate after his Resurrection: "Feed