

Third Sunday of Easter 2019

My beloved brothers and sisters, in this Gospel, the Apostles, still unable to grasp the reality of Jesus, the Divine Lord Risen from the Dead, have gone back to the Lake of Galilee, as Jesus commanded them; but, Jesus is not with them. They are still profoundly discouraged by the Passion and Death of Jesus, and do not yet understand His Resurrection appearance to them. Peter decides to go back to his old way of life, as do the other disciples; and so, they go out fishing. Remember, at the beginning, Jesus called them and said: "Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men..."; and they left everything to follow Him. But, they still do not trust Him, they trust in what they know, and isn't that the struggle for all of us as well? We return to what is comfortable for us, instead of moving into the unknown future!

They fish all night, but they catch nothing. That is because what is absolutely essential is missing: Jesus is missing, and so they catch nothing . Sometimes, God allows our best-laid-plans to fail, not to torment us; but rather to draw us into His greater good!

In the next scene, Jesus appears on the shore, although they do not recognize Him, with a fire going, and asks them: "Children, have you caught anything?" They tell Him their discouragement, and He tells them, "cast your nets on the right side for a large catch." So great is the catch, 153 fish, that it almost tears the nets. Immediately, John knows that this is the Lord, perhaps he knew all along, and he proclaims it. The response of Peter is to immediately jump into the water, which is a Baptismal image: recognition is followed by response! Obedience to the Divine Word, is filled with Christ's response: He gives them the loaves and fishes He has prepared for them, which is a symbol of the Eucharist.

The number of the fishes is also symbolic: 153. It was believed at that time, that there were 153 different cultures and peoples in the world. The Apostles obedience to the Divine Word results in the miraculous catch of the peoples of the word all gathered into the one boat of Peter! It also represents the fullness of our own lives when we give them over to Christ: He fills up our emptiness with

His Divine friendship and care, meaning and purpose, and His Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity! And, He fills up our lives with wonder, when we are faithful to Him!

Despite the infidelity of Peter, Jesus remains faithful to him, and calls Peter again to be the Shepherd of His Church. Who better to know about the disillusionment of infidelity than Peter, who better to choose to strengthen his brothers than the one who was so weak? Jesus asks him: "Do you love me?" His response is: "Lord you know all things, you know well that I love you!" Jesus responds to him: "Then feed my sheep"

We are all unfaithful at times in our response to the Lord. We all grow discouraged with the infidelities of the Church and with others. Sometimes we give up on our call as did these disciples, but Jesus is never unfaithful to us, and He asks us as He did Peter: "Do you love me?"; and, we are called to the same response: "Be faithful unto death and feed my sheep!"; however, I cannot do this alone, I must always do this in Christ! Amen!