

THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER

Acts 9:1-20; Psalm 30; Rev. 5:11-14; John 21: 1-19

Our Gospel today is about Peter, about his misunderstanding, his doubts, his disbelief of the resurrection of Jesus. Peter and the other disciples had been visited by the Lord twice, but it seems that in today's reading they still didn't understand or believe that He was alive, that He rose from the dead. They were still locked up in the upper room, they were struggling with their doubts, struggling with the appearance of Jesus, struggling with their thoughts of how can this be true. Life was changing too fast for them. They had spent three years of their life with this wandering preacher, giving up their homes, their security, their comfortable way of life, to live with this preacher from Nazareth who made their life anything but comfortable.

They wandered around the countryside, preaching to all kinds of people, stirring up the religious leaders, Jesus performed miracles that made them uncomfortable; He told them things that made them even more uneasy. Then in the last few weeks, things had gotten down right rough. The soldiers came and arrested Him, He was given a very speedy trial, He was found guilty and then sentenced to death. He died on the cross, then when they thought it was all over, when they thought about going back to their old jobs, when the excitement, the hope, the glory, their dream had been ended by the cross and its horrible death, then, the ladies came and told them He was not dead, He was alive. The grave was empty. Life was changing too fast.

They had not even had time to accept His death, now they were told He was alive. Then Jesus appeared to them. He talked with them. He spent time with them. Not only once, but twice, and He even said He was coming back again. But was it really Him? Could we have been dreaming, thought the disciples? Was it really Jesus? Yes, life was changing too fast for the disciples, they could hardly keep up with the changes.

So good old impulsive Peter suggests they go fishing. In this suggestion, Peter was saying: let's go back to something we understand, something we know, something we are familiar with. Let's go back to the security of our old jobs, the security of our families, the security of the familiar.

They needed to get out of the upper room. They weren't used to being cooped up, they were outdoor men, who were comfortable outside; who were used to making decisions outside. So, they went back to the familiar way to struggle with their faith, to struggle with their doubts, to struggle with the resurrection of Jesus. And, maybe in their struggle, maybe in their fishing, they were at a crossroads. Maybe this was a time to come to a commitment about this Jesus. It was a time of struggling, some decide to go home, and some would decide to stick around a while longer to see what this Jesus was really talking about.

This turned out to be no ordinary fishing trip, this trip was going to have some life and death consequences about it.

So they go fishing at night as it was their custom. They fished all night and caught no fish. They probably were feeling even more upset now than before they started. Here they were professional fisherman, going back to fishing after being away for three years, and they catch nothing. It might have made them wonder if they had lost their skill, if they had forgotten to do something important, it might have even made them wonder

if they would ever catch fish again.

Then as they were ready to head for shore, a stranger calls to them, asked them if they had caught any fish. They answered no. Then he tells them to cast their nets on the right side of the boat. They cast their nets into the sea, and caught a whole bunch of fish. However, the catch of fish is not the important part of the story. After the catch of fish, John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, recognized the stranger on the shore as Jesus. He tells Peter, and impulsive Peter, puts his clothes on, jumps into the water and swims to shore. There he finds Jesus who had breakfast waiting for him. There was some fish and bread on the fire, and Jesus invites the disciples to join Him for breakfast, and to add some of their fish to the meal. Peter drags the heavy net full of fish to the shore, places his fish on the fire, and they all sit down and eat with Jesus.

Now, this encounter with Jesus was very important for these men, and it also tells us something about Jesus. These men were making a decision, they were struggling with the resurrection, they were struggling with their faith, they were wondering if their experience with this Jesus was over, or only just beginning, as He had said. In their struggling, in their doubts, Jesus comes.

He comes to them where they are. He comes to them in the ordinary common tasks of life. He meets them there. And notice, He doesn't confront them, He doesn't scold them for returning to something familiar like fishing, He accepts them, and He invites them to share in a meal.

This was a meal of reconciliation like the last meal they had together in the Upper Room on Maundy Thursday. Through the eating and drinking together, the bonds of trust, friendship, belief were made stronger. They didn't have to ask Jesus if it were truly Him, they knew in their hearts it was Jesus.

Jesus came to these men, not to scold them, but to be reconciled. He came to show them He had risen, He came because He knew they were struggling, He came to them where they were so that He could help them make a choice, a choice to follow Him, to catch people instead of fish.

Jesus comes to us in the same way. He comes in our doubts, in our struggles in life. Jesus came to the disciples and built a camp fire, a cook-out and stirred the disciple's faith in Him. He comes to us, maybe not in so dramatic a way, but He is there when our faith needs stirring. Jesus comes to help us through our doubts and our struggles with life and gives us the will to carry on.

With Jesus' help, our doubts will vanish and we will live in faith through him. Alleluia!

AMEN.