



LIVING THE GOSPEL



**Third Sunday of Easter.
May 4th 2025**

Theme: "Do you love me? Feed my lambs!"

Gathering Prayer

All: May your people exult for ever, O God, in renewed youthfulness of spirit, so that, rejoicing now in the restored glory of our adoption, we may look forward in confident hope to the rejoicing of the day of resurrection. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Exploring the Word

Gospel Reading: John 21:1-19

¹ Later on, Jesus showed himself again to the disciples. It was by the Sea of Tiberias, and it happened like this: ² Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee and two more of his disciples were together. ³ Simon Peter said, 'I'm going fishing'. They replied, 'We'll come with you'. They went out and got into the boat but caught nothing that night.

⁴ It was light by now and there stood Jesus on the shore, though the disciples did not realise that it was Jesus. ⁵ Jesus called out, 'Have you caught anything, friends?' And when they answered, 'No', ⁶ he said, 'Throw the net out to starboard and you'll find something'. So they dropped the net, and there were so many fish that they could not haul it in.

⁷ The disciple Jesus loved said to Peter, 'It is the Lord'. At these words 'It is the Lord', Simon Peter, who had practically nothing on, wrapped his cloak round him and jumped into the water. ⁸ The other disciples came on in the boat, towing the net and the fish; they were only about a hundred yards from land. ⁹ As soon as they came ashore they saw that there was some bread there, and a charcoal fire with fish cooking on it.

¹⁰ Jesus said, 'Bring some of the fish you have just caught'. ¹¹ Simon Peter went aboard and dragged the net to the shore, full of big fish, one hundred and fifty-three of them; and in spite of there being so many the net was not broken.

¹² Jesus said to them, 'Come and have breakfast'. None of the disciples was bold enough to ask, 'Who are you?'; they knew quite well it was the Lord. ¹³ Jesus then stepped forward, took the bread and gave it to them, and the same with the fish.

¹⁴ This was the third time that Jesus showed himself to the disciples after rising from the dead.

¹⁵ After the meal Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon son of John, do you love me more than these others do?' He answered, 'Yes Lord, you know I love you'. Jesus said to him, 'Feed my lambs'. ¹⁶ A second time he said to him, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' He replied, 'Yes, Lord, you know I love you'. Jesus said to him, 'Look after my sheep'.

¹⁷ Then he said to him a third time, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' Peter was upset that he asked him the third time, 'Do you love me?' and said, 'Lord, you know everything; you know I love you'. Jesus said to him, 'Feed my sheep.

¹⁸ 'I tell you most solemnly, when you were young you put on your own belt and walked where you liked; but when you grow old you will stretch out your hands, and somebody else will put a belt round you and take you where you would rather not go.'

¹⁹ In these words he indicated the kind of death by which Peter would give glory to God. After this he said, 'Follow me'.

Gospel Focus

There is a tragic resignation in Simon Peter's announcement that he is going fishing. Fishing is what he did before Jesus called, and we saw him leave it behind way back on the Fifth Sunday of Ordinary Time. When Jesus provided a miraculously extravagant catch of fish, Simon Peter left his boats, his nets, even the very catch Jesus had just provided. He dropped it all to follow Christ. Now, in the wake of Jesus' death, when their years together seemed to be for nothing, he picks up where he left off, ready to act as if Jesus had not radically changed his life. However, Jesus calls again, and Peter recognizes him in a miraculous catch of fish reminiscent of their first meeting. He leaps back to Jesus, ready now for a permanently changed life.

Gospel Reflection

At a liturgy held at a Catholic parish, a couple who has been married for fifty years come forward and renews their marital promises to one another. In a Mass held at a nearby convent, a group of sisters, assembled for the yearly gathering of their congregation, publicly renews their vows before returning to their mission. The commitment to love is not something professed only once, but again and again. Recalling one's first fervor of infatuation with the beloved fans into flame again the ability to continue loving despite hardships and challenges.

So it is with Peter in today's gospel. When pressed by a servant girl in the courtyard of the high priest, he had failed to acknowledge that he had even knew Jesus, much less that he loved and believed in him. Earlier at the tumultuous moment of Jesus' arrest, he had hot headedly lashed out with a sword and had cut off the ear of a slave of the high priest. His failures to love are symbolically depicted in his inability to catch any fish.

Yet Peter still does love Jesus and is still able to bring many others into the circle of love. Allowing himself to be led by the Source of love, he experiences forgiveness, renewal, and empowerment to extend that love to others. It is an efficacious and uniting love, symbolized by the great haul of fish and the net that is not torn.

Three times Peter professes his love. Three is a complete number, signaling fullness. Some commentators note that there are two different Greek words for "love" in this exchange between Jesus and Peter. The first two times Jesus uses the verb *agapao*, signaling the kind of Christian love that is totally self-giving and inclusive. Both times Peter responds with the verb *phileo*, to which refers to the love of friends. The third time Jesus switches to *phileo*, to which Peter again responds with *phileo*.

Some commentators think of this shift in vocabulary of Peter's inability to achieve the highest form of love that Jesus asks, and that Jesus comes down to Peter's level the third time. More likely is that the Evangelist is simply varying the vocabulary, as is the case with the verbs for feed (*boskein*, vv. 15, 17) and tend (*poimainein*, v. 16), and the nouns for lambs (*arnion*, v. 15) and sheep (*probation*. vv. 16, 17). Moreover, in this gospel, there is no greater love than the love of one who lays down his or her life for a friend. (15:13).

The love between Jesus and his own is both fruitful and costly. It is not a love that encloses the lovers in an exclusive bubble of bliss. It is a love that bears fruit, extending

itself outward in mission, feeding the hunger of those who are vulnerable. It asks disciples to take a stance with arms outstretched-extended in prayer, in embraced of the Beloved and all his friends, in service to those in need, and finally, in cruciformity-as the outstretched arms of Christ draws all to himself.

Old/New Testament and CCC 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 — Ps 30:2, 4, 5-6, 11-12, 13

R: I will praise you, Lord, for you have rescued me.. (R)

I will extol you, O Lord, for you drew me clear and did not let my enemies rejoice over me. O Lord, you brought me up from the netherworld; you preserved me from among those going down into the pit. **(R)**

Sing praise to the Lord, you his faithful ones, and give thanks to his holy name. For his anger lasts but a moment; a lifetime, his good will. At nightfall, weeping enters in, but with the dawn, rejoicing. **(R)**

Hear, O Lord, and have pity on me; O Lord, be my helper. You changed my mourning into dancing; O Lord, my God, forever will I give you thanks. **(R)**

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 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).)

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 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)

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 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)

Sharing and Discussion

1. In the first reading the apostles, led by Peter, tell the authorities, "We must obey God rather than men." What was Peter's compelling reason to do this? Can we do the same in 2019?
2. We read in the psalms that God journeys with us through darkness and despair and who will not abandon us in times of trial and suffering. How do you hold onto this hope in your own life?
3. The theme for this week, "Do you love me? Feed my Lambs". Jesus asks that we feed his lambs if we love him, who are they and where can you find them?

Closing Prayer

All: Lord God, we forever sing your praise and give thanks to your holy name. Hear our prayers and petitions this day, and help us always to be obedient to your will. 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.