

May 4, 2025

Written by
THE
FAITHFUL
DISCIPLE

Third Sunday of Easter

Acts 5:27-32, 40b-41 | Rev 5:11-14 | Jn 21:1-19

GROW AS A DISCIPLE | PRAY, STUDY, ENGAGE, SERVE

Underlying Peter's simple statement in today's Gospel, "I am going fishing," is an ocean of sadness. This leader of the Apostles was once so eager and self-assured that he declared to Jesus, "Even though I should have to die with you, I will not deny you." (Mt 26:35) But we know the story: At the decisive moment, Peter yielded under pressure and three times denied that he even knew Jesus. Now, after witnessing his Master's arrest and execution, Peter, whom Jesus called to leave his nets to be a fisher of men (see Mt 4:19), returns to his old profession. And even there he sustains another failure: he can't catch any fish! Swimming to shore, the ever-impulsive Apostle discovers that Jesus had already procured fish for breakfast without his help. Imagine Peter's consternation: my vocation as an Apostle, my career as a fisherman, my professed willingness to die for the Lord - everything I thought I could hang my hat on - were pretense and illusion.

GO EVANGELIZE

PRAYER, INVITATION, WITNESS, ACCOMPANIMENT

In our relationship with God, we are at times beset by the reality of our own weaknesses and apparent failures. But for Peter as for us, despondency does not have to have the final word. In one of the most intimate exchanges in the Gospels, Jesus heals Peter's self-inflicted wound. "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" the Lord asks three times. What Jesus desires from the Apostle is not eloquent declarations of courage; he wants Peter's love; he wants his heart: conscious of its frailty and humble enough to be led where it does not want to go. Neither Peter's day job nor his grandiose spiritual aspirations are useful to the Lord if Peter has not first surrendered himself to God. This is because only a heart which belongs to God and draws its strength from him can bear fruit for the kingdom of heaven. Such is likewise true for us, often so anxious about tomorrow or preoccupied with our attempts to "earn" God's love. Our primary responsibility, without which none of our other labors will be fruitful, is to give our hearts completely to him.

PRAY

Repetition is the mother of learning. Three times, Jesus asked Peter to renew his love - perhaps, in part, to convince Peter! This week, offer your heart to God as soon as you get up in the morning. You could even use Peter's words: "Lord, you know that I love you." By making this a habit, you invite God's grace and strength to make each day's actions fruitful.

