

3RD SUNDAY OF EASTER! “WE MUST OBEY GOD RATHER THAN MEN

Peter who denied Jesus three times even before a young girl is now bold enough to stand before the Sanhedrin to speak about Him. There had been a transformation in the lives of the apostles through The Holy Spirit, and they had come to know Jesus better. They rejoiced even for the fact that in the name of Jesus they were to undergo suffering.

Why was Peter telling the council that it was good to obey God rather than men? The experiences of the events after the resurrection had great impact on the apostles. In the gospel reading, Peter and some of the apostles went back to their former career, which was fishing. Unfortunately they caught nothing till Jesus appeared to them again and when they obeyed His instructions, they caught a lot of fish. The message of the Psalmist comes alive here: “Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labour in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the guard keeps watch in vain,” (Ps.127:1).

The vision of John also tells us why it is better to listen to God rather than men. The saying of the elders reveals the power of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. “Worthy is **the** Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honour and glory and blessing”. And all creatures over the whole world were also saying: “To Him who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honour and glory and might forever and ever!” So the elders and every creature in heaven and on earth, realized that power is invested in Jesus.

The encounter with Jesus at the shore of the sea of Tiberias, was like a second call to follow Him. He also indicated to them that He had nothing against them by eating with them. He reminded them that without Him they could do nothing, as He once told them: “I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing,” (Jn.15:5).

Whose voice do we always hear? Whose instructions are we following? Is it that of Jesus, or our own, or somebody else's? Do I obey God, or what others tell me, or what the society wants me to do? Not everything that our parents, friends, husbands and wives, and the society tells us to do are in line with what God wants us to do.

We have not been able to follow Jesus and obey God because many of us have not yet realized that all authority and power have been given to Christ; "for in Him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers - all things have been created through Him and for Him," (Col.1:16).

There is no doubt that greater power is invested in Jesus. Do the wind and the sea have ears? No, they do not have ears, yet they listen and obey the Lord, (Mk.4:35-41). We have ears, but we don't listen and obey Him. The apostles obeyed Him even though at the beginning they did not realize that it was the Lord. This is the kind of obedience and trust we are to have in Jesus.

Human beings often deceive us in many ways. They promise manna but it turns out to be a stone; they promise milk, but they give us vinegar; we are promised peace but we are exploited and molested. Even if we receive what is promised, there are strings attached to it. We forget sometimes that those we listen to may be even more ignorant about many things in life and about our faith than us.

Peter was called to make a restitution for his denials. When he expressed his love for Jesus, he was given a responsibility, that was, to take care of God's people. Love of God and neighbour goes with responsibilities. Jesus invites us to follow Him as He told Peter. Are we ready to obey and follow Him?