

## St Pius & St Anthony Homily 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday Easter Year C (2025) Luke

An enjoyable activity, when I was a kid, to get out, or away from things, was to go fishing. Even from home – there was a lake nearby, to our neighborhood. We called it By-pass Lake, it was on the southern end of Owensboro. Interesting thing about the layout of that actual loop, the By-Pass, was that if you drove it fully around the city, every time it had an elevated overpass, there was a lake next to it (I suppose where they dug out the dirt-fill to raise up the overpass road part). It was easy enough to get there even for us kids. We would walk down the railroad tracks, which provided its own fun because we might discover old railroad spikes or pieces of coal bumped out of the train cars along the way! But we walked the tracks, past Hoboes Woods (where it was said, stowaway hoboes on the trains would camp out!). But our biggest obstacle to going fishing just anytime, was getting fresh bait to fish with. There was a Fish & Tackle store, not too far away from our home. Distance wasn't the problem, money was! We were kids! Until, my dad came up with the great idea to create a 'worm bed' and for us to grow our own bait! A worm bed was wonderful way, for us to grow worms to catch fish! It was a boxed in area, behind our garage, where we piled our raked leaves. In the shade, but we kept the ground moist, too and decomposing. Dad even brought home used coffee grounds from his work, we scattered on the bed to feed them with - (did that give them caffeine energy to eat more and bulk up to nightcrawler size!)

But fishing was a good get-away for us, got our minds off things and it was good soul-soothing activity (we always released the fish back-cleaning them would be work- and we went to relax!) but fishing was a good coping mechanism for us to deal with our 'tween' and 'teen' stress!

That is how I see what the apostles are doing today. With the trauma of Jesus' execution, and the perplexing accounts circulating about Jesus appearances here and there, they feel like they've lost their moorings. So, they are getting back to the water and what they used to know well, to get-away from it all.

We may be surprised at how quickly, though, the apostles lose their Way. They had been with Jesus a good while. They had been through discipleship training with Him (recall that in Matt 10:7-8, He had sent them out from Him with mission instructions, "As you go, 1) make this proclamation: 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' 2) Cure the sick, 3) raise the dead, 4) cleanse lepers, 5) drive out demons." They had specific tasks to go out from Him and do in the meantime. So, in the wake of Jesus' death and rumored resurrection, why have the apostles not kept to their training? They seem to all relapse and regress to their pre-Jesus past-times. Peter says, "I am going fishing". Maybe this is similar to the usual well-intentioned advice people give to others after some trauma, or following the

death of a loved one, they tell us to “Keep up your scheduled routine” & to ‘Stay busy’ to cope with our loss and for adjustment to it.

Yet, something is not right with the apostles. They are not following through with actions that Jesus tasked them with. I guess I understand their confusion. They are falling back on what they were doing before meeting Jesus. *It is what they know.* Peter says, “I am going **(BACK)** to fishing.” *(A side note here, is that John’s gospel is implicitly underlining the leadership role of Peter, as prince of the apostles or what we call “First Pope”, because notice his effect on the others: He says he’s going back to fishing, and they all say “We will come with you”-they are naturally following Him!)*

But here, the critical issue arises, “How well do they do without Jesus?” In their own words, when asked by Jesus, who they don’t recognize on the seashore, “Have you caught anything?” (Jn 21:5), they answer “NO-nothing”. So, their idea, it is not working for them!

But this reading reinforces so beautifully for us, how faithful and ever-patient our Shepherd Jesus is to us! He never gives up on us! As He advises the apostles, “Try your nets over the right side of boat.” And after they do that, so many fish jump into the net, they cannot raise the net into the boat!

I think this is when it starts hitting them. “We’ve been here before!” Luke’s gospel tells of an earlier miraculous catch of fish, (2 boat-fulls of fish-what a haul!) at the beginning of their meeting Jesus and answering His call! Back then, Jesus had specifically redirected their work, no longer would they be fishermen, but afterward now they would be fishing ‘for men’. A more significant work of drawing people in, to the kingdom of God with Him (Lk 5:1-11). That earlier call, highlights how sidetracked they are here, going back to simply fishing for food again.

But our patient, loving Jesus is prepared for such ‘backsliding’ of His own. He knows us. He comes to meet us where we are, to provide for us and get us back in His company. In our reading, Jesus has prepared a meal for them and a fire to warm and dry their clothes. He calls us back. And I love how Jesus helps them ‘save face’ from their fall in grace, by gently calling them back with familiar reminders, as if He is letting them realize on their own and come to senses, returning themselves. Jesus asked them to bring some of their fresh catch to combine with His pre-cooked meal *(similar to how he used the little boy’s five loaves & two fish in John 6--using what they had to multiply and make be enough to feed 5,000)* Yet, Jesus wants us to be an active part in our own redemption. He wants to use our contribution, and for us to put in our effort. I compare Jesus’ invitation for the apostles to bring Him some of their catch as a public redemption of their roles, to being similar to how Jesus helps Peter be redeemed publicly, by Jesus offering the opportunity through His three questions, “Do you love me?” He was creating the moment, of Peter now affirming (undoing his three denials) three times His love

and fidelity to Jesus again. to which Jesus commands Him to, show it through service of others-feeding them. Jesus calls them back to the mission. But again, notice how Our Lord comes to them where they are, even in their 'backslid condition'. He tends to their needs and empowers them again to follow Him. That is resurrection. Jesus' own, yes, but by our answering His call, and letting Him fish through us in mission, it also means our own resurrection in Him (our sharing in His Life!)