

[Acts 5:27-32, 40b-41; Ps. 30; Rev. 5:11-14; John 21:1-19]

Appropriately, on this the Third Sunday of Easter, our Gospel recounts the third time that the Risen Lord appeared to His disciples.

There is something very significant in the numbers mentioned in this appearance story. Why does it matter that there were 153 large fish in the miraculous catch?

Why did Jesus ask Peter three times if he loved Him? There were 153 known species of fish at the time. Recalling the promise of Jesus at the first miraculous catch, "I will make you fishers of men," the 153 fish represent all the people of the world.

As Pope Francis said so many times, this emphasizes the fact that salvation and the Gospel message is for the whole world. Again, Pope Francis often said, "Todos, todos, todos. There is room for everyone in the Church."

At the Ascension, Jesus says, "Go therefore, and make disciples of ALL nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." The Risen Lord reminds His disciples of their mission, and in fact commissions them. And US.

Then Jesus asks Peter three times so that he would have an opportunity to take back his three denials of Jesus during the Passion. St. John points out the charcoal fire. Why is this mentioned? He points out that Peter was warming himself over a charcoal fire as he was confronted by the crowd and denied three times that he even knew Jesus. Now they are back over a charcoal fire and Jesus asks the question three times, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" Peter has the opportunity to tell Jesus three times that he loves Him.

Another question is, “Why does Jesus call Peter, Simon, son of John? When Jesus first looked at him He said, “You are Simon, son of John, from now on you will be called Cephas, (which is translated Peter).” (Jn 1:42). Standing on the rock of Caesarea Philippi, Peter once proclaimed, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” Jesus said to him in reply. “Blessed are you, Simon son of John. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father. And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church.” (Mt 16: 17-18).

So why does Jesus revert to calling him Simon, son of John? Jesus is reminding Peter of the necessity of remaining connected to the source of grace. And of his roots. You and I must never forget where we come from. They shape who we are today.

Have you noticed that the only time that the disciples, fishermen by trade, ever catch any fish is when Jesus is with them and instructs them where to drop their nets? As the weather gets warmer, Jesus would make a good fishing buddy for us, no?

Only after Peter allows himself to be loved by Jesus, is he capable of becoming a channel of that love. The the Risen Lord commands Peter, “Feed My lambs,” only after Jesus feeds him.

Filled with the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, Peter becomes a new creation as he boldly proclaims the Risen Lord. We hear such bold speech today. Filled with the Holy Spirit Peter will live out his life faithfully following Jesus through the Cross – and HIS cross. And now we, Christ’s Church, must follow in Peter’s large footsteps.

This week’s Reflection Questions:

- The disciples find themselves at a crossroad: They must strengthen their witness and attend to the business of gathering more souls for the Kingdom, but they must do it against the strict commands of the local authority. They choose their faith over the law, and following Jesus over falling back into their old routines. When have YOU chosen to follow GOD rather than PEOPLE?
- A slain lamb is hardly an inspiring symbol. How do you find power in Jesus' suffering and death? How can you find hope in your own weakness and vulnerability?
- And the ULTIMATE QUESTION: Are YOU ready to follow Jesus Christ with all your heart, with all your mind and with all your soul? The choice is yours. And mine. ALLELUIA and AMEN!