

Weekend Readings & Reflections

April 30-May 1, 2022: Third Sunday of Easter

Reflection: *There are two places in Scripture where the curious detail of a “charcoal fire” is mentioned. One is in today’s Gospel, where the Apostles return from fishing to find bread and fish warming on the fire. The other is in the scene in the High Priest’s courtyard on Holy Thursday, where Peter and some guards and slaves warm themselves while Jesus is being interrogated inside (see [John 18:18](#)). At the first fire, Peter denied knowing Jesus three times, as Jesus had predicted (see [John 13:38](#); [18:15-18](#), [25-27](#)). Today’s charcoal fire becomes the scene of Peter’s repentance, as three times Jesus asks him to make a profession of love. Jesus’ thrice repeated command “feed My sheep” shows that Peter is being appointed as the shepherd of the Lord’s entire flock, the head of His Church (see also [Luke 22:32](#)). Jesus’ question: “Do you love me more than these?” is a pointed reminder of Peter’s pledge to lay down his life for Jesus, even if the other Apostles might weaken (see [John 13:37](#); [Matthew 26:33](#); [Luke 22:33](#)). Jesus then explains just what Peter’s love and leadership will require, foretelling Peter’s death by crucifixion (“you will stretch out your hands”). Before His own death, Jesus had warned the Apostles that they would be hated as He was hated, that they would suffer as He suffered (see [Matthew 10:16-19,22](#); [John 15:18-20](#); [16:2](#)). We see the beginnings of that persecution in today’s First Reading. Flogged as Jesus was, the Apostles nonetheless leave “rejoicing that they have been found worthy to suffer.” Their joy is based on their faith that God will change their “mourning into dancing,” as we sing in today’s Psalm. By their sufferings, they know, they will be counted worthy to stand in heaven before “the Lamb that was slain,” a scene glimpsed in today’s Second Reading (see also [Revelation 6:9-11](#)).*

OPENING PRAYER

Leader: Welcome to our discussion for the third Sunday of Easter. Let us open our time together in prayer:

All: Dear Lord, you are always waiting with open arms to welcome us back when we fall away from you. Give us the grace to be like Peter, who ran to you to seek reconciliation. Help pick us up as often as we fall, and assist us in times of temptation and weakness. Be with us as you were with your disciples, and make us ready to accept the overabundance of your gifts, like the overabundance of fish that you blessed the fishing apostles with. Help us to remain always near you. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Leader: In today’s Gospel reading, Jesus challenges Peter to love him in a total, unconditional way. But before he does this, Jesus shows his overwhelming love for Peter and the other apostles. He gives his fishing disciples such a massive catch that their nets could barely hold it all. This is a wonderful example of how God desires to bless us more than we could ever imagine. As we watch the following video, let’s reflect on some of the ways God has given you unexpected gifts or blessings this week.

Play the video on FORMED.org: [Opening the Word – 3rd Sunday of Easter \(Year C\)](#)

FIRST READING ~ Acts 5:27-32, 40b-41 ~

When the captain and the court officers had brought the apostles in and made them stand before the Sanhedrin, the high priest questioned them, “We gave you strict orders, did we not, to stop teaching in that name? Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and want to bring this man’s blood upon us.” But Peter and the apostles said in reply, “We must obey God rather than men. The God of our ancestors raised Jesus,

though you had him killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him at his right hand as leader and savior to grant Israel repentance and forgiveness of sins. We are witnesses of these things, as is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him.” The Sanhedrin ordered the apostles to stop speaking in the name of Jesus, and dismissed them. So they left the presence of the Sanhedrin, rejoicing that they had been found worthy to suffer dishonor for the sake of the name.

The Sanhedrin involved 71 members of the High Priests, former High Priests and ruling families of Jerusalem. It was the highest Jewish civil and religious court. Peter and the apostles show impressive courage in witnessing to Christ. Peter focuses the argument to obedience to God rather than to men.

- What does obedience to God actually mean for you and your life-style? How could you show you live more for God than the world?

SECOND READING ~ Revelations 5:11-14 ~

I, John, looked and heard the voices of many angels who surrounded the throne and the living creatures and the elders. They were countless in number, and they cried out in a loud voice: “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches, wisdom and strength, honor and glory and blessing.” Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, everything in the universe, cry out: “To the one who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor, glory and might, forever and ever.” The four living creatures answered, “Amen,” and the elders fell down and worshiped.

The Book of Revelation was written to comfort Christians suffering persecution. It is resistance literature. Using symbols and code language it reveals that the Empire of Rome is only temporary, the final scene will be eternal life for those faithful to the Lamb / Jesus. John provides a picture of the heavenly liturgy. The Old Testament expectation awaited a Lion but instead Jesus comes as a Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches, wisdom and strength...

- What is the difference between a Lion and a Lamb? How does Easter reveal that God conquers through Love not Power?

GOSPEL ~ John 21:1-19 ~

At that time, Jesus revealed himself again to his disciples at the Sea of Tiberias. He revealed himself in this way. Together were Simon Peter, Thomas called Didymus, Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, Zebedee’s sons, and two others of his disciples. Simon Peter said to them, “I am going fishing.” They said to him, “We also will come with you.” So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. When it was already dawn, Jesus was standing on the shore; but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, “Children, have you caught anything to eat?” They answered him, “No.” So he said to them, “Cast the net over the right side of the boat and you will find something.” So they cast it, and were not able to pull it in because of the number of fish. So the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord.” When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he tucked in his garment, for he was lightly clad, and jumped into the sea. The other disciples came in the boat, for they were

not far from shore, only about a hundred yards, dragging the net with the fish. When they climbed out on shore, they saw a charcoal fire with fish on it and bread. Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish you just caught.” So Simon Peter went over and dragged the net ashore full of one hundred fifty-three large fish. Even though there were so many, the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, “Come, have breakfast.” And none of the disciples dared to ask him, “Who are you?” because they realized it was the Lord. Jesus came over and took the bread and gave it to them, and in like manner the fish. This was now the third time Jesus was revealed to his disciples after being raised from the dead. When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” Simon Peter answered him, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my lambs.” He then said to Simon Peter a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Simon Peter answered him, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Tend my sheep.” Jesus said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Peter was distressed that Jesus had said to him a third time, “Do you love me?” and he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep. Amen, amen, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to dress yourself and go where you wanted; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.” He said this signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when he had said this, he said to him, “Follow me.”

Jesus appears to his disciples as they seek to return to their previous lives. Some walk away from Jerusalem and others go fishing. Jesus turns them around and sends them on mission. The large catch of fish shows that the disciples working on their own can catch nothing, but in obedience to

Christ - everything is possible. 153 is said to be the number of nations known in the world, and the total number of fish types known at that time. The missionary outreach is to all nations and all peoples!

- *Is there a particular mission field that you feel attracted to work in? What next little step might obedience to Christ involve for you in being part of the Church's 'mission'?*

John 21 is regarded as an addition to the conclusion of the Gospel of John showing the rehabilitation of Peter. Peter is chastened by his failures and publicly, in front of the others, is invited to profess his love for the Lord. Each request 'do you love me' is a painful reminder to Peter of his betrayal.

- *Do you think a rehabilitated shepherd is a better shepherd? What does Jesus' re-appointment of Peter as leader show us about Jesus? About God?*

The ultimate and final invitation of Jesus is framed by the request to lay down your life: 'follow me'.

- *What reaction takes place in your head and heart to the invitation to 'lay down your life' for the Lord? Frequently people comment that there are so many lapsed Catholics no longer practicing their faith or coming to Church. Perhaps another perspective is seeing them as collapsed Catholics. The Sheep were not being fed.*
- *How could you respond to the invitation Jesus gave to Peter to 'feed and tend' his sheep so that they are well nourished. What has fed you that you could creatively share?*

MEDITATION

In His third appearance to the apostles, Jesus prepared a breakfast for them and ate with them. Peter's prompt response to draw near to the Lord and eat breakfast with Him stands in sharp contrast to his previous denial and distancing himself from his Master

during the night of Jesus' arrest and trial. Why did Jesus question Peter's love and loyalty three times in front of the other disciples? It must have caused Peter pain and sorrow since he had publicly denied Jesus three times previously. Now Peter, full of remorse and humility, unequivocally stated that he loved his Lord and Master and was willing to serve him whatever it might cost. When Jesus asked Peter "do you love me more than these?" he may have pointed to the boats, nets and other fishing companions. He may have challenged Peter to let go of his career as a fisherman for the task of shepherding the people whom Christ would call to be his disciples. Jesus may have also pointed to the other apostles and to Peter's previous boast: "Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away" (Matthew 26:33). Peter now makes no boast or comparison but humbly responds: "You know I love you."

The Lord Jesus calls each one of us, even in our personal struggles, weakness, and sin, to draw near to Him as our merciful Healer and Savior. He invites us to choose Him as our Lord and to love Him above all else. What can hold us back from giving Him our undivided love and unqualified loyalty (Romans 8:38-39)? Nothing but our own sinful pride, stubborn will, and blind fear can hold us back from receiving His gracious forgiveness, loving-kindness, and faithful love. God's abundant grace (favor and blessing) is a free and unmerited gift, far beyond what we deserve or could possibly hope to obtain through our own means. We can never outmatch God in generosity and goodness. He loved us first and our love for Him is a response to His exceeding grace (unmerited favor) and mercy.

The Lord Jesus wants to personally draw near to each one of us and He knocks every day on the door of our hearts and He waits for our response (Revelation 3:20). The Lord is ever ready to help us grow in the knowledge of his great love for us and in the exceeding richness of his mercies and goodness towards us. Ask the Lord Jesus to rekindle your love for him and to transform your life through the power and action of the Holy Spirit who dwells within you.

- *What can hold us back from giving Him our undivided love and unqualified loyalty?*
- *Do you recognize the Lord's presence with you and do you listen for his voice as he speaks to you in your heart and through the word of God in the Sacred Scriptures?*

CLOSING PRAYER

Leader: In closing let us now pray together:

ALL: Lord Jesus, inflame my heart with your merciful love and remove everything that is unkind, ungrateful, unloving and unholy, and that is not in accord with your will. May I always seek to love you above all else and follow you wherever you wish to lead me. Amen.

Leader: (if time, let us offer up our intercessions ... St. Michael... Our Father... Hail Mary... Glory Be...)

[Opening reflection was shared from St. Paul Center at <https://stpaulcenter.com/studies-tools/sunday-bible-reflections>]

[video can be found at FORMED.ORG "Opening the Word". Additional reflections can be found at FORMED in "Opening the Word"]

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