



**Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> May 2025**

***The Third Sunday of Easter***

**Gospel Reading**

**John 21.1-19**

**Jesus Appears to Seven Disciples**

21 After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias; and he showed himself in this way. <sup>2</sup> Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples. <sup>3</sup> Simon Peter said to them, 'I am going fishing.' They said to him, 'We will go with you.' They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

<sup>4</sup> Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. <sup>5</sup> Jesus said to them, 'Children, you have no fish, have you?' They answered him, 'No.' <sup>6</sup> He said to them, 'Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some.' So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish. <sup>7</sup> That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, 'It is the Lord!' When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on some clothes, for he was naked, and jumped into the lake. <sup>8</sup> But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, only about a hundred yards off.

<sup>9</sup> When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. <sup>10</sup> Jesus said to them, 'Bring some of the fish that you have just caught.' <sup>11</sup> So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred and fifty-three of them; and though there were so many, the net was not torn. <sup>12</sup> Jesus said to them, 'Come and have breakfast.' Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, 'Who are you?' because they knew it was the Lord. <sup>13</sup> Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. <sup>14</sup> This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

**Jesus and Peter**

<sup>15</sup> When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?' He said to him, 'Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed my lambs.' <sup>16</sup> A second time he said to him, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' He said to him, 'Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Tend my sheep.' <sup>17</sup> He said to him the third time, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' Peter felt hurt because he said to him the 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.' <sup>18</sup> Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go.' <sup>19</sup> (He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, 'Follow me.'

**Homily**

On Easter day we celebrated the greatest act of love, the power of God's love for each one of us. Our Lord and Saviour died for our sins, but the power of God's love rolled the stone away and raised Jesus to life. For Christians, this is the biggest celebration of the year, it is at the heart of our faith, and the gospel which we are called to proclaim.

Last week we heard how Jesus appeared to the frightened disciples who were hiding in a locked room. They rejoiced at seeing him and we are told he commissioned them for their ministry and gave them the Holy Spirit. He appeared again when Thomas was there, so that he could see the nail marks in his hands and believe.

Today we have the third encounter for the disciples with Jesus. I wonder whether you have ever found yourself at a loss to know what to do when you are grieving a loved one. Perhaps this is what is happening here with the disciples, they don't really know what to do with themselves so they decide to go fishing, to do something which they used to enjoy and won't find too taxing. And it is in these humble surroundings that Jesus appears to them again. They don't recognise him at first, but then the disciple Jesus loved says to Peter "It is the Lord". Impulsive Peter immediately dresses and jumps into the lake to get to Jesus first and then they all have breakfast together.

What comes next is a beautiful personal commissioning for Peter. Jesus asks Peter a very personal question, "Do you love me?" But he doesn't just ask him once, he asks him three times, mirroring Peter's denial of knowing Jesus three times. Peter responds saying, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you", and in his third response he acknowledges that Jesus knows everything and therefore *knows* that he loves him. Here we can see the love openly demonstrated between Jesus and Peter, and in Jesus' responses to Peter there is forgiveness for his denials. It isn't clearly stated, but it is clearly there. Jesus' responses to Peter give instructions, "Feed my lambs", "Tend my sheep" and "Feed my sheep". Would Jesus be giving Peter these responsibilities if he hadn't forgiven him, or was unsure of him fulfilling this vocation? No. Jesus was sure of his disciple Peter and placed his trust in him. But this interaction goes beyond forgiveness to restoration. Jesus is restoring Peter to a leadership role, one where he will tend and feed God's people. He has been forgiven and Jesus is inviting him to embrace his forgiveness, despite his failures, and be free from guilt. This is a huge encouragement to us, that Jesus wants to forgive us, to free us from our sins and restore us to that right relationship with him. He wants those who have strayed to come back to him, into his loving embrace.

On Easter day, ministers – lay and ordained – will have spoken of how there is no greater love than the love God has for **us**. But today we read of Jesus asking Peter, "Do you love me?" Peter had tried to show Jesus how much he loved him previously in John's gospel, for example, by denying Jesus washing his feet, and then turning to violence when he cut off the

slave's ear with his sword, trying to protect him. Each time Jesus had corrected him. Now Jesus is saying to Peter, OK, if you really love me, this is how I want you to show it. I want you to feed and tend my sheep. I want you to show my people love and care. I want you to lead and guide them in the gospel, feeding them with God's word and prayer.

Jesus has that same question for you today. "Do you love me?"

How can *we* show our love for Jesus? Follow Jesus's example, firstly by taking yourself somewhere quiet and spending time with God in prayer and studying the bible. And then, follow his command to love one another. From these actions God will draw each one of us to his service, to the baptismal vocation he has called us to, just as he did Peter. Amen.

### **Conversation Questions**

1. What does it mean to you to love Jesus?
2. Are there things you need to change in your life so that Jesus knows you love him?
3. Is there anything else from the passage not already discussed that speaks to you?  
What is it?
4. What will you do this week in your Monday-to-Saturday ministry in response to what you have heard today? #everydayfaith

### **Prayer**

Spend some time in prayer, responding to what you have heard today and listening to what God might be saying to you.

### **Collect of the day**

Almighty Father,  
who in your great mercy gladdened the disciples  
with the sight of the risen Lord:  
give us such knowledge of his presence with us,  
that we may be strengthened and sustained by his risen life  
and serve you continually in righteousness and truth;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.

*(or)*

Risen Christ,  
you filled your disciples with boldness and fresh hope:  
strengthen us to proclaim your risen life  
and fill us with your peace,  
to the glory of God the Father.

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