

**May 1, 2022**

**Third Sunday of Easter**

**John 21:1-19**

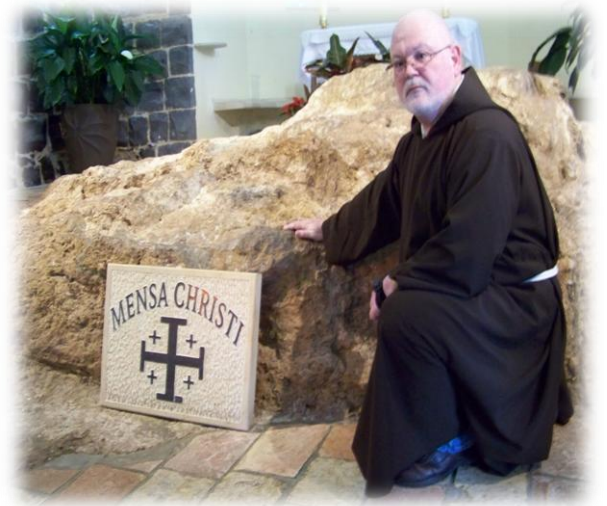
After this, Jesus revealed himself again to his disciples at the Sea of Tiberias. He revealed himself in this way. Together were Simon Peter, Thomas called Didymus, Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, Zebedee's sons, and two others of his disciples. Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said 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?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs." He then said to him a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep." He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was distressed that he 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."

### **Background**

Many Scripture scholars believe that this text was not part of the original gospel, but was added later, probably by some of John's disciples. The text itself draws on some themes that are very much a part of John's gospel. Jesus invites the disciples to a meal of bread and fish. The members of John's community would recall the account of Jesus feeding the crowd with the five loaves of bread and two fish (John 6:3-15). They would also be familiar with Jesus' description of himself as the good shepherd (John 10:1-18).



"Mensa Christi", Latin for "Table of Christ" along the Sea of Galilee, Israel. The site where Jesus and his disciples ate breakfast after the resurrection.

The third important element from John's gospel may not be as apparent as the two previous; the role of the disciples in Jesus' ministry, especially the role of the beloved disciple and Peter.

The disciples are portrayed in the gospels as arguing among themselves about who was the most important. For example, the brothers, James and John, seek assurance from Jesus that they will hold the two most prestigious positions when Jesus comes into power. Even at the Last Supper they are caught arguing among themselves about who is the most important. This prompts Jesus to wash their feet as a model for how they are to seek greatness.

The Mediterranean culture today, as at the time of Jesus, has a much different system of loyalty than that found in the west. For the disciples and people of their culture, their loyalty was strongly tied to the leader, Jesus, but not to one another. From this perspective, the arguments between them, even at the Last Supper, are understandable. That atmosphere would have persisted after Jesus' death until they could work out among themselves where and in whom they would place their loyalties.

There is evidence of that struggle being worked out among them in the text here. In John's description of the Good Shepherd, he says that the gatekeeper lets in the one whom he identifies as the good shepherd. The good shepherd is further described as the one who goes ahead of, and leads, the sheep. Recall the arrest of Jesus and his being taken to the house of the high priest. The beloved disciple is described in terms that parallel the role of the good shepherd. Both Peter and the beloved disciple follow Jesus, but it is the beloved disciple who is permitted to enter the inner courtyard. He speaks to the gatekeeper who brought Peter in. The beloved disciple is described as the one who follows Jesus through the gate. It is he who is recognized by the gatekeeper and is permitted to enter. Lastly it is he who leads, who goes before Peter and leads him into the courtyard (John 18:15-16). John's description of Jesus' celebration of the Passover meal with his disciples also places John in the most significant role. It is John, the beloved, who sits next to Jesus. Jesus indicates the identity of the betrayer to him. Peter then asks the beloved disciple about whom Jesus was speaking (John 13:21-30). Both of these texts suggest that John was casting the beloved disciple in a more favored position.

However, in the gospel text for this Sunday, their roles change drastically. Here, it is Peter who is clearly the leader and the person who takes the initiative. He declares that he is going fishing, and it is the other disciples, Thomas, Nathanael, James, John, and two other unnamed disciples, who follow. When the disciples encounter Jesus after a long night of fishing, it is John who first recognizes that the person on the shore is Jesus. But it is Peter who jumps into the water to join Jesus. At the invitation of Jesus to bring some of their catch to the meal, it is Peter who alone drags the net full of fish. After the breakfast, it is Peter that Jesus turns to with the question, "Do you love me?" In this dialogue, Jesus gives Peter the role of caring for his flock. Peter has become the Good Shepherd. We can only wonder what took place in the early Christian community that led to Peter taking on this role. That this text is being proclaimed as a Gospel for this important feast testifies that God continues to work in the church and in communities, even in difficult struggles.

### **Reflection Questions**

1. What is your experience of struggles for importance within your family or an organization to which you belong? Do you ever experience those struggles over the health or life of the group? What kind of role do you normally take on?
2. How do you feel about disagreements and arguments within your Christian community or Church?
3. Given the reality of the early Christians after the death and resurrection of Jesus, what are some possible motives for Peter deciding to go fishing?

4. Why would Jesus address them with the title “children?”
5. What do you sense John is suggesting by the fact that it was only the beloved disciple who recognized Jesus on the shore?
6. Have there been times when you did not recognize the presence of God in your life? Maybe God was not present in the ways that you were hoping to find God’s presence?
7. What are some reasons why Jesus would ask Peter three times, “Do you love me?”
8. Have you ever asked someone if they love you? Can you ask God if he really loves you?
9. In response to your desire to return to the Lord after you have sinned, do you sense that Jesus then says to you: “Go and sin no more. Forgive as you have been forgiven. Feed my sheep.” How do you respond to God’s forgiveness of you?
10. Do you think that Peter’s profession of love for Jesus is purposefully tied to the command to care for Jesus’ sheep?
11. Take some time to talk openly about whatever it is that most stirs you in this gospel.

The gospel background and reflection questions are written by Fr. Paul Gallagher, OFM.  
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ABOUT  
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IS IT.



NO. NO IT'S NOT.



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