

Third Sunday of Easter – Cycle C
Focus: Witnessing to the Risen Christ

First Reading
[ACTS 5:27-32, 40B-41](#)

Psalm
[PS 30:2, 4, 5-6, 11-12, 13](#)

Second Reading
[REV 5:11-14](#)

Gospel
[JN 21:1-19](#)

In today's Gospel, we are presented with yet another charcoal fire. This is the second and last charcoal fire in this fourth Gospel. Of course, we all remember that first charcoal fire. It was the one outside of Caiaphus' house in the courtyard when Jesus was first arrested. You know where Peter repeatedly denied of even knowing Jesus for fear for the consequences. How many times did Peter deny Jesus? Three, right! Now here in this Gospel reading we hear of the second charcoal fire. At this fire, however, we hear a different story, a story of commitment and a story of Grace and forgiveness. It is at this charcoal fire where Peter professes his devout love for Christ not once but three times.

What does this tell us today? Let's begin with today's first reading where we are taught that following God's law is paramount over that of man's law. Now this can be quite stark in the eyes of all of the evangelical extremists and Jihadists spewing hate. But if you put it within the context of God's law, as defined by Christ, God's law is the law of love Love God and Love neighbor. Christ went on to teach us who our neighbor was through the Good Samaritan parable. Unfortunately, some extremist point to this reading as biblical justification for rising up against people and governments, Jesus made it very clear that we are to render unto Caesar what is Caesar's. Meaning our government has a duty and role to play in our safety, protection and security and that must be supported and those laws followed. But we have a democratic process that gives us a voice in that government and we are to use that voice. Jesus went on to teach us through the Woman Caught in adultery; that "he who is without sin may cast the first stone." Meaning that the judgment of ones soul is best left up to God alone, which is further reinforced in the Judgment of Nations from Matthew's gospel. Christ and this first reading are asking us to stand up and be advocates for those who are voiceless. We are challenged to engage in civil discourse rather than passing judgments. We are challenged to be instruments of love and healing rather than knives that cut and separate. Lastly, we are never to give up on positive change through the work of our faith and Church as Jesus never gives up on us.

Our second reading from Revelation is our medical/spiritual prescription. We are told of the Lamb who was slain for us all and in that last line of the reading we heard of the honor and worship befitting the Lamb. So to live out our call from the first reading as advocates of God's Love, we need this Eucharist to not only nourish us but to honor and worship the very savior of our souls.

So now in the Gospel we are at the Sea of Tiberius, you know the sea to which the man Jesus walked on water. The sea in which Peter learned that we must stay fixed on Jesus lest we succumb to the world's desires and wants. But why were the disciples there? Why were they fishing? They have had the Holy Spirit descend upon them like tongues of fire. They had experienced dishonor for the sake of Jesus. What are they doing fishing?

Let's think of it this way. Imagine winning the lottery and you decide to take the immediate pay out. What do you do first? Most often we can think of a couple of things right? Pay off everything, take a vacation, but then what? How will your life be different, will it be different? Well the apostles just hit the Spiritual Lottery and needed some time to figure things out. So why not go back to where it all began, with Peter and many of the other disciples fishing when Jesus first call them to discipleship? Here they are fishing once again, this time Christ calls out to them in much the same manner but refers to them in a familial fashion, as Children. As they began their journey of discipleship with that first encounter, here they begin the apostolic journey of the church. You see the imagery of the net not breaking under the strain of all the fish is the Church based on the Holy Spirit and the 153 large fish are people, cities, and countries. The quantity of the fish also reflects God's abundance in pouring out His grace.

But unlike the first fishing encounter, Simon Peter leaps out of the boat to go to Christ Jesus. Peter left his friends and the profit of that great fish catch to go to Christ. It is easy to see that this time Peter is fixed on Jesus, right. Why then did he have to swim? Hmm? Perhaps the charcoal fire on the shore turned Peter's focus inward to his sin. Regardless, Peter arrives on shore and joins Christ at the charcoal fire where fish and bread are already cooking. Once more Christ has prepared the banquet of the Eucharist for his disciples and feeds them all.

After this celebration of the Eucharist, Christ then challenges Peter, three times, to profess his love each time countering Peter's denial. From this profession of faith, Christ not only forgives, but goes on to describe where this faith will all lead to in the end which is a death like His but ultimately the Glory of Salvation.

You see from this we learn that discipleship is not measured by the absence of failure or mistakes but by the openness to obeying, listening to the commands coming from Christ Jesus, recognizing the abundances of God's gifts, and our willingness to grow into new life. Today's Gospel reflects a new beginning let it also be a reflection of our new beginning where we forgive the failures and mistakes and work to continue this Church's mission.