

### **Third Sunday of Easter: Do you love me more than these?**

Acts 5:27-32,40b-41; Psalm 30:2,4,5-6,11-12,13; Revelation 5:11-14; John 21:1-19

Dear family and friends of CCST,

Greetings of peace from the risen Lord!

In some way, Peter's encounter with the risen Lord could be a story for some of us, or it could be our story of the victory of love and forgiveness amid problems in the family. The love of the risen Lord Jesus has taken away the shame of Peter and incredibly transformed him! It invites us to believe that if we open and receive the love of Jesus, we can be restored, transformed, and strengthened.

The Gospel tells us that after the miraculous catch, Peter, who denied the Lord three times, was now sharing a meal with Jesus, whom he betrayed. What an awkward situation, isn't it? Remember, Peter, denied the Lord three times. We can assume that Jesus knew how Peter felt, but his tender presence led Peter to face his shame. Our Lord did not question nor condemn him for why he abandoned and denied him. Instead, he offered Peter an opportunity to proclaim and renew his love. He asked Peter how much he loved him three times -- "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" (Jn. 21:15).

Realizing what Peter did to the Lord, he is humbled by the threefold questions. They penetrate the truth of himself, the imperfection of his love. He responded, "Yes, Lord, I love you. You know that I love you" (Jn 21:15). He knew who he was and what he did. He once said that he would not abandon the Lord, yet he denied him three times. He knew that he had run away and gone into hiding. What he could give in return for Jesus' love was his way of loving.

The love of Peter here is a "humiliated love." It is a love of a poor, humiliated person that comes from an honest acceptance of oneself. His love for the Lord went through a genuine reality check, and he didn't have to blow the trumpet to prove his love nor needed the Lord's miracles to believe. It is a love that has nothing to prove nor seek for miracles to believe in Jesus. He realized this through his failure. Often failure can be the finger of God pointing the way, awakening, inspiring us to be aware of our helplessness and our need for a Savior.

Jesus accepted Peter's imperfect and humiliated love and gave him a great responsibility to feed and tend his sheep. Peter's discipleship and leadership, which were lost by his threefold denial, are now restored through his threefold yes to the love of Jesus. Eventually, by the grace of God, his love was purified and perfected. We see him and the rest of the disciples' courage and boldness to witness Jesus in our first reading. They were relentless in proclaiming Jesus even though they were told to stop. They were even rejoicing because they found themselves worthy to suffer dishonor for their love of the Lord (cf Acts 5:28-29).

Discernably, only through one's genuine love for Jesus will one genuinely care for others. When we say, "I love you, Jesus," you also love those he cares for and do what he loves to do. When we say "I love the Lord," we care about his Church and walk with him proclaiming the Gospel. For most of us, we have that strong desire to love God with all our hearts, minds, souls, and strength. And yet we all know our love is not perfect, and we sometimes falter along the way in our love for God.

The encounter of Peter with the risen Lord Jesus reminds us that there are extraordinary graces that God bestows on us. The two divine gifts we can draw out from today's Gospel are: first, the gift of acceptance and sorrow over our sins. The humble acceptance and sorrow over our sins provide the grace to see and recognize our need for a Savior. Second, the gift of God's redeeming love, that is, by his love, we are redeemed. He loves us first, and he strengthens those whom he loves. That love moves us to care for others. God's love always leads us to a mission! Indeed, it is a necessary dimension in our worship and adoration to God, for God cares about our love for others.

I want to think that the Parish Ministry Fair that we launch this Sunday, led by our ministry leaders and members, provides us the opportunity to make the love of Jesus felt and celebrated in our parish community and exercise our baptismal call for discipleship. The various ministries of our parish have prepared something for you, and I am grateful for all their efforts. I want to invite you to please visit the parish hall or approach any of our volunteers for inquiries, or you may call the parish office. Your participation in any parish ministry is a humble way of saying together with Peter, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you" (Jn 21:17).

To this end, let me share with you the words of the late Fr. Pedro Arrupe, the General Superior of the Society of Jesus. He gives us practical advice. Many of you may have heard his wisdom, but I think it is worth repeating. He said, "Nothing is more practical than finding God that is falling in love with God in an absolute quiet way. What you are in love is what seizes your imagination, will affect everything; It will decide what will get you out in the morning, what you do in the evenings, how do you spend your weekends, what you read, whom you know, what breaks your heart, what amazes you with joy and gratitude. Fall in love, stay in love, and it will decide everything."

God bless you!

Fr. Manny Hewe  
Pastor