

## CHAPLAIN'S BULLETIN      MAY 1, 2022



Dear Folks,

As we continue to celebrate the Easter season, we encounter the risen Jesus in John 21. It is worth looking at it a little closer.

We see an echo of Luke 5:1-11, when Jesus called Peter, James, and John. After a night of catching nothing, it was morning (See Luke 1:78), Jesus calls them to put out their nets again. As with several of the resurrection accounts, they don't immediately recognize Jesus. They bring in a very large number of fish (153!), but unlike in the Lucan account, the net is not tearing (John 1:11). Scholars have said that in those days there were 153 different species of fish, and this is a foreshadowing of the Church being able to hold all kinds of people together (when there is a schism in the Church, that is a result of human failing, not a limitation of God's Church).

Jesus calls them to bring some of the fish they had caught, but he already had bread and fish cooked on a charcoal fire (John 21:9-13). This makes no sense at first, but it echoes all the accounts of multiplying loaves and fishes, in which He calls them to bring forth what they have, but it is He who feeds. This is a paradox in Christianity: it is all the work of His grace, but it requires every last bit of effort that we have. Grace is not an excuse to slack off, and our efforts do not allow us to boast before Him as if we had accomplished something that He has not given us.

Notice it is a charcoal fire (details matter in John, and we must keep our eyes sharp). Remember John 18:18, in which Peter was warming himself around a charcoal fire when he was denying Jesus. Psychologists tell us that our sense of smell is the most powerful sense for evoking emotional memories. Do you think his three-fold denial was on Peter's mind? Weighing heavily on him? Hmm. Jesus does not address the denial directly, but calls for a three-fold affirmation, each time bringing a call to take care of Jesus sheep (we remember that Jesus is the good shepherd as He taught in chapter 10). Jesus reconciles with Peter and sends him forth as shepherd. The gift he was given was not just for his sake, but for the sake of Peter's service to the mission of the Church. Going through Acts of the Apostles, we see that God will protect Peter and Paul again and again, but still allow them to suffer and eventually be martyred. It is about what serves the mission. As an Easter people, we come to Jesus confidently, knowing that He has won the victory. We can bring our sinfulness to be reconciled, knowing that the gifts we receive are not just for our sake, but so that we can serve the mission of the Church.

We are called to put forward our mightiest effort, but know it is He who wins the victory. To be an Easter people is to be a people of mission.

Blessings,  
Fr. Jim