

## **Homily For the 3rd Sunday of Easter - Year C**

### **St Peter's (5) Sunday Masses - April 30/May 1, 2022**

**Acts 5:28-32, 40-41** "We are witnesses to these things. So is the Holy Spirit God give to those who obey him."

**Psalm 30:1-12** "O Lord, my God, I will give thanks to you forever."

**Revelation 5: 11-14** "I heard every creature in heaven and earth sing 'To the Lamb be blessing and glory forever.'"

**John 21:1-19** "Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you ... Feed my sheep."

### **The Best Story Ever**

#### **Introduction**

Once upon a time, there was a great warrior, a beautiful princess, an evil ogre, a magical forest. A long, long time ago in a galaxy far, far away ... These are the beginnings of stories that make us sit up and want to know what will happen. Most of the time we know they are just stories. They can be great stories. But we have the best story of all, and there are three great things about it: God wrote the story. It's a true story. We are in it. Like all good stories, either true or fiction, there is conflict, there is confusion, there is good and evil, and there is a ultimate victory of good over evil, especially when that victory looks the least likely outcome. Jesus is the hero of this story. Jesus is the one who tells the story. Jesus came to show us how the story unfolds.

During Jesus' lifetime, his friends often didn't get what he was doing. They tried to stop the children from coming to Jesus. They tried to stop the woman from touching the hem of his robe. They tried to stop others not a part of the group from preaching in his name. They couldn't stay awake while he sweated blood in the garden. After he had died, and even after he rose from the dead, all they could think of to do was go back to fishing. That was best option the world had to offer at that moment.

Jesus' healing and preaching and loving people and casting out demons and controlling the forces of nature didn't change the world right away. In fact it only got him tortured and killed. The world has it wrong when it says that we follow

Jesus because he did those things. If that is all there was, Jesus would just be a good man with a few disciples, maybe some superpowers, and very little influence on history. But we know that Jesus DID change everything.

Easter is the heart of Christian faith and life. Without the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ, there is no gospel message, no future hope, and no new life in Christ. But with the resurrection of Jesus Christ at its center, Christianity stands unique and alone in the world. No other religion is based on the historical resurrection of its divine founder. No other religious leader could say, "I AM the resurrection and the life," and then go out and prove it by his own resurrected life.

## **Acts**

Jesus is not only the central figure in the story of salvation, but he also casted the main characters. He called Peter first. In all of the lists of Apostles, Peter is first. He is always included in any intimate conversation with Jesus. He witnessed Jesus' transfiguration on Mt Tabor. Twice, Peter identified Jesus as the Messiah, the son of the living God. It was Peter to whom Jesus gave the keys of the kingdom. Peter walked on water because he had his eyes on Jesus. Peter jumped in the water first to go ashore to the Lord. Peter went first into the empty tomb.

But Peter also had to be rescued from the waves and hear Jesus say: Oh man of little faith, why did you not trust? At the transfiguration, Peter tried to make the glorious apparition last forever. At the last supper he refused to let Jesus wash his feet. He argued that Jesus should not go and die in Jerusalem. For that, Jesus called him Satan. And that was only his first day as pope. It was by a charcoal fire where Peter denied Jesus, after declaring emphatically that he would never do so.

The transformative moment in Peter's life was when, after having betrayed his friend and Lord, today's passage from the Gospel of John tells us about another charcoal fire when Jesus gave Peter absolute and total forgiveness. For each time that he had denied knowing Jesus, and even cursed those who asked him about Jesus, he had to reaffirm his love for God, for the saviour, for Jesus himself.

A good story has some humour. I think the events that are told in Acts today is like that. The Sanhedrin thought they had solved the problem by getting rid of

THE teacher, but now they have many teachers to deal with. They tell Peter and John to stop teaching in the name of Jesus. But they keep doing it. They arrest them and say, "We told you to stop preaching in that name." And they keep saying, "That's not going to happen. Jesus is the name above all names. Do what you want to us but we won't stop." So they let them go saying, "Now don't do it again." Everyone knows they won't stop. But the religious leaders have used up all their crucifixion coupons with the Romans when they demanded Jesus crucifixion. They fired their best shot to make that happen, even denying that God is their king in favour of Caesar. They don't know what to do with these guys who are on fire for the name of Jesus.

"They rejoiced that they were considered worthy to suffer dishonour for the sake of the name." What name? The name ABOVE all names. The one to which we say AMEN. The one before which we kneel.

Something happened for those fishermen to become fearless and powerful teachers and martyrs. They were filled with joy. Have you ever felt lifted up like that? There is no feeling like it. The psalmist gives us some idea: "I will extol you and sing praise and give thanks. This should be our energy. God has delivered us from death and sin."

## **Revelation**

Later, John was given a vision to encourage him at a time of great discouragement. He had just witnessed the Church at Ephesus scattered, its priests killed. But God showed him a vision of the Lamb of God in heaven, being worshipped joyfully. John, beloved disciple, this is what it will be like. John, beloved disciple, this is what it IS like all the time in heaven.

Heaven has stopped being a goal for us. It sounds boring and, after all, aren't I basically a good person. And you know basically God would never keep me out of heaven. If you really do think that this vision into heaven is boring, then you are definitely not heaven ready.

The saints and angels - all the heavenly host - are not just engaged in some activity that they are supposed to enjoy because they are in heaven. NO, they are

singing because they can't help themselves. Like Peter and the Apostles who rejoiced to be found worthy to suffer for the name, they are IN THE PRESENCE of that name. They are in the continuous presence of the Lamb of God. They have been made free, and they WANT to be there praising God all the time.

This is what happens at mass. We have a vision of the heavenly worship. Why go to mass? Because mass is when heaven and earth touch each other. Because you owe him, not because you are going to get something or the music or the homily might be good, but because God, who has given us everything and has not left us to drown in misery and sin, demands our worship, not because he needs it but because we need to worship. We are a worshipping people. If we don't worship God, we will make gods. We do it all the time. Easter gives us the vision of the only true and authentic worship. It's the worship of the only one deserving of worship. It's the NAME. JESUS.

### **Call To Action**

Many of us go from Easter to Easter where not much changes. We might ask ourselves: Are we just fishing and having breakfast and watching Netflix and stocking up on toilet paper. I'm not ridiculing any of those things. I do them as well. But this and living as if we have NOT been made daughters and sons of God, and transformed by our baptism into living mysteries of Christ?

This is a great time of year to ask If there is joy in our lives

- perhaps circumstances have conspired against you
- perhaps relationships have not worked out
- perhaps you have suffered a great loss
- perhaps you don't even know but you have a vague emptiness or longing within you

Maybe you are like Peter and the others who went fishing. Remember that they caught nothing until they allowed their lives to be directed by the risen Christ. Peter could not lift himself out of the state of sin and shame that he had put himself in by denying Jesus. Only by Jesus could he be lifted up again.

Bishop asked a young person what question he should ask of those about to be confirmed. One girl told him: Bishop, ask them if they believe that Jesus rose from the dead and have they have received him in their hearts as their saviour.

Again today and throughout this Easter season, we are invited to go from an ordinary life of fishing for whatever it is we think valuable, to an extraordinary life with Christ, so full of joy that we will rejoice at every aspect of our lives. If you are human, and I suspect that most of you are human, there are times when you don't feel that. but today is a time to let ourselves feel the joy of knowing Christ risen.

#### **Key Verses Today**

**Entrance Antiphon:** *Cry out with joy to God, all the earth. O sing to the glory of his name. O render him glorious praise, alleluia.*

**Collect:** *May your people exult forever, O God, so that we may look forward in confident hope to the rejoicing of the day of resurrection.*

**Acts:** *The high priest questioned the Apostles, saying, "We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and you are determined to bring this man's blood on us." But Peter and the Apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than human beings. The God of our ancestors raised up Jesus, whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Saviour that he might give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him."*

**Psalm:** *Sing praises to the Lord, O you his faithful ones, and give thanks to his holy name. For his anger is but for a moment. His favour is for a lifetime. Weeping may linger for the night, but joy comes with the morning. Hear, O Lord, and be gracious to me. O Lord, be my helper. You have turned my mourning into dancing. O Lord my God, I will give thanks to you forever.*

**Revelation:** *I, John, looked and I heard the voice of many angels surrounding the throne and the living creatures and the elders. They numbered thousands of thousands, singing with full voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slaughtered to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honour and glory and blessing!" Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea and all that is in them singing, "To the one seated on the throne and to the lamb be blessing and honour and glory and might forever and ever!" And the elders fell down and worshipped.*

**John:** *Gathered were Simon Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, the Sons of Zebedee and two others. Peter said, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will go with you." Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach and said to them, "Children, you have no fish, have you?" They answered, "No." 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. When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there. Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." He took the bread and gave it to them and did the same with the fish. 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." 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." He said to him a 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. Very truly I tell you, 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 (indicating the kind of death by which he would glorify God). After this he said to him, "Follow me."*