

## 3rd Sunday of Easter, Year C

### GOSPEL

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Jesus showed himself again to the disciples. It was by the Sea of Tiberias, and it happened like this: Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee and two more of his disciples were together. Simon Peter said, 'I'm going fishing.' They replied, 'We'll come with you.' They went out and got into the boat but caught nothing that night.

It was light by now and there stood Jesus on the shore, though the disciples did not realise that it was Jesus. Jesus called out, 'Have you caught anything, friends?' And when they answered, 'No', he said, 'Throw the net out to starboard and you'll find something.' So they dropped the net, and there were so many fish that they could not haul it in. The disciple Jesus loved said to Peter, 'It is the Lord.' At these words 'It is the Lord', Simon Peter, who had practically nothing on, wrapped his cloak round him and jumped into the water. The other disciples came on in the boat, towing the net and the fish; they were only about a hundred yards from land.

As soon as they came ashore they saw that there was some bread there, and a charcoal fire with fish cooking on it. Jesus said, 'Bring some of the fish you have just caught.' Simon Peter went aboard and dragged the net to the shore, full of big fish, one hundred and fifty-three of them; and in spite of there being so many the net was not broken. Jesus said to them, 'Come and have breakfast.' None of the disciples was bold enough to ask, 'Who are you?'; they knew quite well it was the Lord. Jesus then stepped forward, took the bread and gave it to them, and the same with the fish. This was the third time that Jesus showed himself to the disciples after rising from the dead.

After the meal Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon son of John, do you love me more than these others do?' He answered, 'Yes Lord, you know 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 replied, 'Yes, Lord, you know I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Look after my sheep.' Then he said to him a third time, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' Peter was upset that he asked him the third time, 'Do you love me?' and said, 'Lord, you know everything; you know I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed my sheep.

'I tell you most solemnly,  
when you were young  
you put on your own belt  
and walked where you liked;  
but when you grow old  
you will stretch out your hands,  
and somebody else will put a belt round you  
and take you where you would rather not go.'

In these words he indicated the kind of death by which Peter would give glory to God. After this he said, 'Follow me.'

(John 21:1-19)

### DID YOU KNOW?

Points of interest and Catholic lore

- The Sea of Galilee is also known as the Sea of Tiberias.
- Jesus' triple repetition of his question to Peter, 'Do you love me?' echoes the three denials of Jesus by Peter on the morning of his execution.
- The Greek word for fish, *ichthys*, is an acronym of the Greek words for 'Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour'. The fish was an early symbol used by Christians to denote Christ.
- The appearance of Jesus to the disciples in last week's gospel occurred in the upper room in Jerusalem where they had celebrated the Passover feast. Here, the disciples have returned to Galilee in the north.
- Early tradition holds that Peter met his death by being crucified upside down in Rome.

### EXPLORING THE WORD

This long gospel text has three movements: the extraordinary catch of fish; the meal on the shore, with obvious eucharistic overtones; and the dialogue with Peter, which contains his commissioning as leader of the flock.

The great haul of various fish symbolises that the Good News of the Gospel will take root in many nations and draw many converts—but only with the Lord's help. Alone, the disciples were unsuccessful!

- What can you achieve now that you have the Lord with you?
- The open-air meal indicates that Jesus still nourishes his disciples and evokes the many meals that Jesus shared with his followers. In what ways does the Eucharist continue to nourish those who follow the risen Lord?

Jesus' dialogue with Peter establishes that love is the basis from which a genuine Christian ministry of service springs. Along with other gospel texts, this passage reinforces the role given to Peter as the future leader of the flock; he is the one entrusted with the task of caring for the sheep after the Good Shepherd has gone.

- 'Do you love me?' How might you answer Jesus' question?

### MAKING CONNECTIONS

Opportunities for group discussion and personal prayer

- 'It is the Lord.' What moments of joyful recognition have you experienced in the last two weeks?
- Peter literally 'went overboard' in his effort to reach the risen Lord. Share some recollections of times when you have reacted with extreme enthusiasm to something.
- Do you now have a role in leading others to Christ? If so, how can you act on that this week?
- Pray these words with Peter this week:

*Lord, you know everything,*

*you know that I love you.*

## SHARING THE TRADITION

A closer look at the Scripture of the day, to see how it makes more explicit God's word to us through the teachings of Jesus Christ

The period between Easter and Pentecost is a time of mystagogy—a time for pondering and coming to more deeply understand the experiences of initiation, as well as a time for catechesis on the sacraments.

- Discuss some of the sacramental overtones contained in this text, such as the eucharistic meal and Peter's diving into the waters to come to Christ.

The role of Peter as the leader of the community of believers has been handed down in succession to the popes.

- You could discuss the role of the papacy and the structure of church leadership, with special attention to the ways in which leadership might be viewed as a ministry of service based on love.

## SYMBOLS AND IMAGES

The boat is an ancient image for the Church. The enormous catch of fish symbolises the success that the disciples will have in becoming 'fishers of men', and in leading people to believe in the risen Christ. The reason for the precise number of 153 fish caught remains a mystery.

## LIVING THE WORD

Practical ideas for group leaders to employ in connecting Scripture and daily life, with suggestions for music and environment

- How does your community leader exercise his ministry of service to the parish? Who helps the priest in roles of service to others? You could invite some of the people involved to share their reflections on service with the newly baptised. Explore how they will exercise a ministry of service to others. Involve them in the work of the ministries available in your community.
- Continue using the symbols of Easter and initiation as a focus for prayer. Pray for each other as you deepen your understanding of your faith. You could recite the Creed together. Conclude with an Easter song.

## NOTES

A series of horizontal dotted lines for taking notes.