

Sunday May 1, 2022
Third Sunday of Easter
Parishioner Reflection

By: Jim McDonald

In the first reading, we find Peter and the Apostles boldly proclaiming the Good News of Jesus' death on the cross and his resurrection from the dead so that we might receive mercy and forgiveness of our sins from God the Father. Not even threats and orders from the Jewish authorities to cease teaching about Jesus could dissuade them. Peter and the Apostles had received the grace and courage by the anointing of the Holy Spirit to go out and proclaim the Good News, without which they would have remained "in the upper room".

The Psalm is a beautiful hymn of thanksgiving for God's faithfulness and power over death. Joy follows sorrow and mourning, by the grace of God.

In the second reading, from the Book of Revelation, we see the Heavenly Host praising Jesus, the Lamb of God, as the only one worthy to open the scroll with the seven seals containing the designs of God. The scroll is described in Revelation 5:1 as being written on the inside and on the outside, indicating that it is full and complete. Jesus earned the right to open the scroll by his suffering and death on the cross out of love for God the Father and for souls. John heard every creature in heaven, on earth, in the sea and even under the earth praising God and Jesus the Lamb of God. Jesus had descended to the dead, those under the earth, before he was raised from the dead in order to bring the Good News even to them.

In the Gospel reading, we flash back to just after Jesus' resurrection, the third appearance of Jesus to Peter and the disciples. They were by the Sea of Tiberias (Galilee) and were still unsure of what the future held. Simon Peter said, "I am going fishing.". This is something in which he was very practiced and in which he could find comfort in its familiar routine.

It is significant that Jesus chose the early morning to meet Peter and the disciples, just after sunrise at the beginning of a new day. As today's Psalm says, "Weeping may linger for the night, but joy comes with the morning." After a long night of fishing with no catch, it is curious that the disciples dropped their net again at the suggestion of an apparent stranger on the beach. At that moment, they did not know that it was Jesus speaking to them. Perhaps they were dejected at their lack of success and felt that they had nothing to lose...and everything to gain.

Some of you may have already experienced the peace and serenity of an early morning on a beach with the water gently lapping the shore and birds calling to the sunrise. It naturally brings your thoughts to the wonder of creation, to eternity and to God. After a fruitless night of fishing, it was the perfect time for Jesus to reveal himself and gently guide Peter and the disciples to a new challenge, a new vocation. First, he would feed them, to give them strength for the day, with bread and fish that he had placed on a fire but also with the fish that he had provided in the catch.

After Jesus had been arrested, Peter had denied knowing Jesus three times. At the sound of the cock crowing, Jesus had looked at Peter, not in condemnation but in love and at the same time in sadness. Jesus would not give up on Peter as Peter felt the guilt of his betrayal and wept bitterly. How often have we rejected God's way, God's love for something that was ultimately fleeting and felt the anguish in the realization. But Jesus does not withhold his love and mercy. Peter sought Jesus' forgiveness in humility and repentance and was forgiven. Peter and the disciples are just like us. It took the mercy and grace of God for them to find their vocation and purpose in building the body of Christ on earth (the Church). We thank our Lord Jesus for vocations to the ministerial priesthood and for those who hear and answer His call. We must always keep them in our prayers.

We too have a calling to love and serve God in our families and in our community. There are and will be times when our efforts seem fruitless but by placing our faith and trust in Jesus, we can be sure that our efforts will not be in vain. Just as the disciples obeyed Jesus' request to cast their net on the right side and so made a bountiful catch, our efforts made in faith and trust will produce fruit by the grace of God, even if we are not there to see it.