

3rd Sunday Easter 2013/

April 14, 2013 (St. Vincent Campus 9:00am)

Readings: Acts 5:27-32,40-41; Revelation 5:11-14; John 21:1-19

Our risen Lord appeared to the Apostles on the shore of the Sea of Tiberias and instructed them to cast their nets to the starboard side of the boat (John 21:6). After a miraculous catch of fish and breakfast, our Lord asked Peter three times: “[D]o you love me more than these? ... [D]o you love me? ... [D]o you love me?” To each question and with increasing fervor, Peter professed his love of Christ. To each expression of love, our Lord responded with words which indicated Peter’s special office and mission in the Church: “Feed my lambs ... Tend my sheep ... Feed my sheep” (John 21:15-17).

The threefold questioning of Peter underlines very much that the very foundation of his service in the Church is Jesus Christ and Peter’s love of Him. From His glorious seat at the right hand of the Father, our risen Lord gives to Peter and to his successors the grace of shepherding the flock throughout the world. After the threefold questioning, our risen Lord indicates the full importance of shepherding the flock, and doing so after the Heart of the Good Shepherd. Peter’s shepherding would mean laying down his life for the sheep. Our Lord tells Peter:

“Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you girded yourself and walked where you would; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish to go” (John 21:18-19).

Here Peter assumes a central position in the post resurrection community. In some ways it is the scene where he replaces John, the beloved disciple as foremost among the disciples. The threefold denial of Peter is now replaced with a three-fold affirmation, allowing for a fresh start.

This text though, is about much more than St. Peter. It is meant for us today. Our Opening Prayer notes that in “rejoicing now in the restored glory of our adoption,” we may now “look forward in confident hope” to the day of resurrection. God chose us and He continues to choose us as His very own, and we look forward with hope to our resurrection. This Opening Prayer quite well summarizes the Christian’s journey on this earth, and situates it within the context of our final beatitude. As St. Augustine so beautifully wrote, “*You have made us for yourself, Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you*”¹

I also found myself thinking about St. Peter today. How do you think he felt when asked three times if he loved the Lord? Do you think he was hurt? It is hard to think otherwise, it seems to me. And yet he continued to answer the question each time that it was put to him. “Do you love me?” He is asking that of us today. You and I will be asked again and again to demonstrate our faith. Perhaps only when really tested, do we ever get a sense of its strength and resiliency, or perhaps its weakness.

The tragic news of family violence cannot escape our notice, not even here in this neighborhood. It is a fact of life today, and it strikes at families in all communities, including the Hmong community. We must re-commit ourselves to maintaining our life of faith and prayer within our families. “Do you love you family?” Then, pray together, remain united in charity. Family life must stay at the very core of your commitments to one another and to your community, especially in difficult times.

We will remain restless until we rest in the Lord, until we say, again and again, “Yes, Lord, I love you.” We can never say it enough or too often. Let our own three-fold affirmation of faith cover over any doubt in our hearts. “Lord, you know that we love you.”

¹ St. Augustine, *Confessions*, (Book I, 1,1)