

Homily of Third Sunday of Easter, Year C, 2025

Acts 5:27-32, 40-41; Psalm 30:2, 4-6, 11-13; Revelation 5:11-14; John 21:1-19

We see a new Peter in the first reading. Peter who was so afraid that he denied being a disciple of Jesus when accosted by the maid of Annas, the high priest, and by the slave of Caiaphas the high priest (John 18:17 and 26). Transformed by the power of Christ's resurrection, he stood, boldly, before the Sanhedrin and declared, "We must obey God rather than men." The reading continues, "The Sanhedrin ordered the apostles to stop speaking in the name of Jesus and dismissed them. So they left the presence of the Sanhedrin, rejoicing that they had been found worthy to suffer dishonor for the sake of the name." The Sanhedrin is a court or an assembly of Jewish elders. They were infuriated that the disciples of the man they crucified had continued to preach about him, working miracles in his name and making more disciples. For that reason, they began to persecute the apostles and the Christians.

Unfortunately, all kinds of persecutions are going on in many countries and places. There are religious persecutions, political persecutions, racial persecutions, and so on. Persecutors force their victims to obey 'men' rather than God. It is so sad the helplessness of victims in many countries and places.

On March 13, 2025, The Catholic News Agency writes, "The report published March 12, 2025 by the information service *Agenzia Fides* shows that of the 145 Catholic priests kidnapped in Nigeria between 2015 and 2025, 11 have been killed and the whereabouts of four others remain unknown." These numbers are blood-chilling, but they appear undercounted.

Christianity, in particular, is under attack in many parts of the world. Let us pray for strength and courage for the victims and for the conversion of persecutors.

There are times when situations challenge us to stand by the truth or defend our beliefs, doctrines, and practices as Christians and as Catholics. At such times, Peter and the other apostles encourage us to obey God rather than 'men.' Let us not display the fear and cowardice of 'old Peter.'

Jesus did not count it against his disciples who deserted him during his passion. After his resurrection, he appeared and revealed himself to them wherever they were. Today's gospel is one of his appearances and revelations to them.

John recognized him and said, "It is the Lord." O Lord, may we recognize your presence among us in God's word and Sacraments, in our brothers and sisters, in our church community, in our neighborhood, in our work and business places, in strangers, and in your mighty deeds among us, that we may testify like John, "It is the Lord." O Lord, even if we desert you by our sins and weaknesses, find us and appear to us as you did for your disciples.

Today's gospel shows us how Peter, believing that his discipleship with Jesus was over, decided to return to his fishing profession. Some of the disciples went with him. Since returning to fishing was not what they were supposed to do, they caught nothing that night. Jesus appeared and instructed them, "Cast the net over the right side of the boat and you will find something." This means that they had cast their net over the wrong side by returning to their fishing profession. When they did as Jesus instructed, they caught so

many fish. Jesus' intervention and the huge number of fish the apostles caught was a foreshadow of the huge Christian population later. O Lord, appear to us and show us the right side to cast our net.

Although Scripture interpreters teach us that Peter's interaction with Jesus in the last part of today's gospel means Peter untying the ropes he tied himself for denying Jesus three times. As a priest, I pray that I am able to untie myself the many ropes I have tied myself, so that I may be free to know Jesus more, love him more, and follow him more. By doing so, I can, properly, feed his lambs, tend his sheep, and feed his sheep. I pray to be able to stretch out my hands to follow Jesus and to be led by him. Please pray with me and for me. We are all invited to untie our ropes and be free to stretch out our hands to follow Jesus and to be led by him.

Finally, the living creatures and the elders in the vision of John in the second reading symbolize angelic beings. They and "every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, everything in the universe" unceasingly worship and with loud voice sing praises "To the one who sits on the throne and to the lamb..." Let us join to worship and sing praises to God and to the Lamb, not only with our lips but also with lives of witnessing God and the Lamb wherever we are.

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