

3rd Sunday of Easter C



***Obedience to God comes before obedience to men.
(Ac 5:29)***

First Reading

Acts 5:27-32.40-41

The high priest demanded an explanation of the apostles. "We gave you a formal warning," he said "not to preach in this name, and what have you done? You have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and seem determined to fix the guilt of this man's death on us." In reply Peter and the apostles said, "Obedience to God comes before obedience to men; it was the God of our ancestors who raised up Jesus, but it was you who had him executed by hanging on a tree. By his own right hand God has now raised him up to be leader and saviour, to give repentance and forgiveness of sins through him to Israel. We are witnesses to all this, we and the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him." They warned the apostles not to speak in the name of Jesus and released them. And so they left the presence of the Sanhedrin glad to have had the honour of suffering humiliation for the sake of the name.

Second Reading

Apocalypse 5:11-14

In my vision, I, John, heard the sound of an immense number of angels gathered round the throne and the animals and the elders; there were ten thousand times ten thousand of them and thousands upon thousands, shouting, "The Lamb that was sacrificed is worthy to be given power, riches, wisdom, strength, honour, glory and blessing." Then I heard all the living things in creation – everything that lives in the air, and on the ground, and under the ground, and in the sea, crying, "To the One who is sitting on the throne and to the Lamb, be all praise, honour, glory and power, for ever and ever." And the four animals said, "Amen"; and the elders prostrated themselves to worship.

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.

Meditation

Christ's appearance to seven of his disciples on the shore of Lake Tiberias marks an important step in the growth of paschal faith. As the Father sent his Son into the world, so the Lord Jesus will send his disciples on mission. The overwhelming catch of fish from the lake is a living parable of the church's apostolic activity. The Risen Christ is the source of its fruitfulness.

Just like the apostles who went back to their nets after the tragedy of the passion, we too are sometimes tempted to lose hope. What if our faith in the resurrection were not more than a religious tradition? What if Christ no longer dwells in this established Church, which seems so rooted in defensiveness and little given to apostolic boldness? If that were so, we might be tempted to return to the reassuring banality of our everyday tasks. Or we might be tempted to organize ourselves into a Christian ghetto, separate from those who might upset our certitudes. We could dream nostalgically of the Church of former times when faith was taken for granted and religion ruled society.

But Christ stands on the shores of this world, more involved than ever, and he calls us to throw away our nets. We do not always recognize him at the first meeting, but he is there. He calls to us from the heart of our communities, in the commitments of those who seek the truth, who love and who forgive, who struggle for a better and more just world. He is there above all in that meal where we share his memory.

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Gospel

John 21:1-19

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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."

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