

FROM THE PASTOR

Dear Brothers and Sisters



‘Simon, son of John, do you love me?’

The fact that the Disciples saw Jesus Christ Risen from the dead did not change their lives. In fact, here they are in today’s Gospel, going back to their old way of life. Having abandoned their nets and boats three years earlier to follow Him, they now return to what they had left behind; forgetting all they had experienced with Jesus.

The Fathers of the Church say the greatest sin is that of forgetfulness. To forget what God has done in one’s life. To forget the marvels of God is to steal his glory. It is what makes salt lose its taste. It makes one neither hot nor cold, but lukewarm.

Each of us has the temptation to forget God, and what he has done in our life. The things of God can easily be relegated to the past, becoming distant faded memories, explained as being merely luck, happenstance, or moments of enthusiasm.

The Gospel names seven disciples who go back to their former way of life. The number seven! There are seven capital sins. Seven were the number of the pagan nations who impeded the people of Israel from entering the Promised Land when they sojourned out of the slavery of Egypt.

The disciples, we are told, are on the Sea of Tiberias, which is the pagan name for the Sea of Galilee. They are returning to their former way of life, a fruitless, empty, pagan way of life.

Having caught nothing, which is what always happens when we do things according to our own reasoning without taking into account the Risen Christ, they see Jesus standing on the shore.

Jesus addresses Peter ‘Simon Son of John!’ Nowhere in the New Testament does it say that Simon Peter’s father was John. In addressing him this way, Jesus is referring to the High Priest par excellence of the Old Testament, whose name was Simon Bar Jonah, or ‘Simon Son of John.’

Simon Peter is the New High Priest of the Church that Jesus is founding. This Church is formed on love.

Three times Jesus asks him ‘Do you love me?’ recalling the three times Simon Peter disowned him. In English the translation is lost, but in Greek there are two different words for ‘love’ which Jesus uses. The first two times he asks ‘Do you ‘agape’ me?’ Agape being the highest form of love. To which Simon Peter responds with confidence ‘Yes.’ The third time Jesus asks him ‘Do you ‘philos’ me?’ Philos is the lowest form of love. It is necessary to love in small things before the great. Be faithful in small things, and the great will take care of themselves.

All of us have betrayed Jesus, three times and many more than three. We too have the temptation to live a pagan life. But Christ Risen appears in our midst in today’s liturgy. His mercy and forgiveness offer the possibility to follow him, and to love him in small things. In doing so, we will discover that the great things will take care of themselves.

The Liturgy invites us to remember: “Do this in Memory of me.”

This remembrance is an encounter with the Risen Christ. It is this encounter which effects a change in our life, filling us with hope.

Christ is Risen, Alleluia! He is Truly Risen, Alleluia!

Fr. Sean