

Third Sunday of Easter, Year C Readings: Acts 5:27-32,40b-41, Revelation 5:11-14 & John 21:1-19  
Theme: "JESUS SAID TO HIM (Peter) THE THIRD TIME, DO YOU LOVE ME?"

On this Third Sunday of Easter, four of our parishioners, namely, Roselynn Harper, Kennedy Hinton, Leah Long, and Valerie Long, are receiving First Holy Communion. We extend our heartfelt congratulations and God's blessing to them, their families, sponsors, and their School of Religion teachers. I am very grateful to Sandy Kraynok, the coordinator of the First Holy Communion class; Doris Sandreth, the Director of Religious Education; and the entire team of our parish School of Religion. God's blessings to you all!

The Sacrament of Holy Eucharist completes Christian initiation. For us Roman Catholics, Holy Communion is the Real Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. The Catechism of the Catholic Church explains it so well: "By the consecration, the transubstantiation of the bread and wine into the Body of Christ is brought about. Under the consecrated species of bread and wine, Christ himself, living and glorious, is present in a true, real, and substantial manner: his Body and Blood, with his soul and his divinity." (#1413. p356. Cf. Council of Trent: DS1640;1651)

The Church, in this very important book, tells us who is to receive Holy Communion: "Anyone who desires to receive Christ in Eucharistic communion must be in the state of grace. Anyone aware of having sinned mortally must not receive communion without having received absolution in the sacrament of penance" (1415. p.356).

In the Gospel reading today, St. John tells us after Jesus' resurrection, he revealed himself again to seven of his disciples at the Sea of Tiberias, also known as the lake Gennesaret or Galilee. Peter returned to his home district of Galilee to resume his previous job as a fisherman. Some of the disciples went with him. Jesus then appeared to them during their fishing in his hometown. It was there that Jesus again did miracle of catching fish for them. Remember, this was the very place Jesus called Peter the first time to be his disciple. They cast the net per Jesus' request and they "were not able to pull it in because of the number of fish."

After Jesus had a breakfast with them, he then posed three questions to Peter regarding his love and fidelity to him. This is the third question Jesus posed to him: "SIMON, SON OF JOHN, DO YOU LOVE ME?" St. John tells us Peter was distressed (more than stressed) that Jesus asked him for the third time "Do you love me?" Peter knew very well that Jesus, his divine master, knew how much he loved him. So why ask him the third time? What then is the significance of these threefold questions? The threefold question/confession of Peter is meant to counteract his earlier threefold denial of Jesus and for Jesus again to mandate him to take care of his sheep/mission.

Fellow parishioners, despite Peter's denial of Jesus three times, Jesus did not write him off. Jesus gave him another chance/opportunity to make it up with love and fidelity. How many of us would trust someone who publicly denied you three times to be in charge of a mission/work so dear to you? Jesus knows Peter's strengths and weaknesses, hence he entrusted his future church into his hands. Yes, Peter proved his love for Jesus' mission, and he died for that. Please, let us not be quick to write someone off when he/she lets us down.

There are two calls of Peter in the Gospel. The first one is at the start of Jesus' ministry (Mark 1:16-18). Then the second call is what we heard in today's Gospel. You notice that three years separated the first call and the second call. A lot of things might have happened between these two calls. One would see that at the second call, Peter has matured in wisdom, knowledge, love, patience, and humility, and is ready to be an apostle of Jesus, and to be the leader of Jesus' Church. We may also investigate our life to see how our faith in Jesus is growing from the very day we became Christians.

Again, it is true that Peter truly loves Jesus. You hear him and other apostles in the first reading courageously witnessing to Jesus' resurrection in front of the Sanhedrin that murdered Jesus. The apostles told the Sanhedrin, "They must obey God rather than men." Peter loved Jesus and his church so much that he died martyrdom.

We're also reminded that Jesus founded his Church not on our human strength but on his divine strength. Jesus is the head of the Church, and he continues to guide it through the Holy Spirit. Fellow parishioners, if the Roman Catholic Church has survived for more than two thousand years and continues to grow, it is purely by God's grace. No one except Jesus can aptly take credit for it.

Jesus continues to call each one of us despite our personal struggles, weaknesses, and sins to follow him. He wants us to continue his mission here on earth. All he wants us to do is to trust in his mercy and love to do his work.

John, in the second reading as a faithful disciple of Jesus, wrote this beautiful hymn of praise and thanks to the crucified and risen Lord Jesus Christ. He continues to use an apocalyptic language to communicate God's message of hope and consolation to his fellow Christians who were going through persecutions because of their faith in Jesus.

As we are in May, the month of the Holy Rosary, let us ask our Holy Mother Mary to intercede for us to be faithful to her Son, Jesus, and his mission here on earth.