Third Sunday of Easter (C)

Gospel text (*Jn* 21:1-19): At that time, Jesus revealed himself again to his disciples at the Sea of Tiberias. He revealed himself in this way. Together were Simon Peter, Thomas called Didymus, Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, Zebedee's sons, and two others of his disciples. Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We also will come with you." So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

When it was already dawn, Jesus was standing on the shore; but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, "Children, have you caught anything to eat?" They answered him, "No." So he said to them, "Cast the net over the right side of the boat and you will find something." So they cast it, and were not able to pull it in because of the number of fish. So the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord." When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he tucked in his garment, for he was lightly clad, and jumped into the sea. The other disciples came in the boat, for they were not far from shore, only about a hundred yards, dragging the net with the fish.

When they climbed out on shore, they saw a charcoal fire with fish on it and bread. Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish you just caught." So Simon Peter went over and dragged the net ashore full of one hundred fifty-three large fish. Even though there were so many, the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, "Come, have breakfast." And none of the disciples dared to ask him, "Who are you?" because they realized it was the Lord. Jesus came over and took the bread and gave it to them, and in like manner the fish. This was now the third time Jesus was revealed to his disciples after being raised from the dead.

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs." He then said to him a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep." He said to

him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Peter was distressed that he had said to him a third time, “Do you love me?” and he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” [Jesus] said to him, “Feed my sheep. Amen, amen, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to dress yourself and go where you wanted; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.” He said this signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when he had said this, he said to him, “Follow me.”

“Jesus said to them, ‘Come, have breakfast.’”

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Today, on the third Sunday of Easter, we are still contemplating the appearances of the Risen One, this year according to the Evangelist John, in the impressive twenty-first chapter, all of it imbued with sacramental references, very much alive for the Christian community of the first generation, that which received the evangelical testimony from the Apostles themselves.

After the Easter events, they seem to return to their usual occupation, as if they had forgotten that the Master had made them “fishers of men.” An error that the Evangelist recognizes, noting that — despite their efforts — “they caught nothing” (Jn 21:3). It was the night of the disciples. However, at dawn, the known presence of the Lord turns the whole scene upside down. Simon Peter, who had previously taken the initiative in the unsuccessful fishing, now pulls in the full net: one hundred and fifty-three fish is the result, a number that is the sum of the numerical values of Simon (76) and ichthys (=fish, 77). Significant!

Thus, when under the gaze of the glorified Lord and with his authority, the Apostles, with the primacy of Peter —manifested in the triple profession of love for the Lord— exercise their evangelizing mission, the miracle occurs: “they catch men.” Fish, once caught, die when they are taken from their environment. Likewise, human beings also die if no one rescues them from darkness and suffocation, from an existence far from God and shrouded in absurdity, leading them to the light, the air and the warmth of the life of Christ, which he himself nourishes from the shore of his glory, a splendid figure of the sacramental life of the Church and, primarily, of the Eucharist. In it the Lord personally gives the bread and, with it, gives himself, as indicated by the presence of the fish, which for the first Christian community was a symbol of Christ and, therefore, of the Christian.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “And when he had eaten before them, he took the remnant, and gave to them. To convey the truth of His resurrection, He ate with them, that they might not suspect that His appearance was not actual, but only imaginary.” (Saint Bede)

- “How does Jesus gaze at me today? How does Jesus look at me? With a call? With forgiveness? With a mission? We all are under Jesus’ gaze: He always looks at us with love, asks us for something and gives us a mission.” (Francis)

- “The encounter with the risen Jesus becomes adoration: ‘My Lord and my God!’ (Jn 20:28). It thus takes on a connotation of love and affection that remains proper to the Christian tradition: ‘It is the Lord!’ (Jn 21:7).” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, Nº 448)