

May 4, 2025  
Third Sunday of Easter  
John 21:1-19

After this, 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."

### **Background:**

Many Scripture scholars believe that this text was not part of the original Gospel, but was added later, probably by some of John's disciples. The text draws on some themes that are very much a part of John's Gospel. Jesus invites the disciples to a meal of bread and fish. The members of John's community would recall the account of Jesus feeding the crowd with the five loaves of bread and two fish (John 6:3-15). They would also be familiar with Jesus' description of himself as the good shepherd (John 10:1-18). The third important element from John's Gospel may not be as apparent as the two previous--the role of the disciples in Jesus' ministry, especially the roles of the beloved disciple and Peter.

The disciples are portrayed in the Gospels as arguing among themselves about who was the most important. For example, the brothers, James and John, seek assurance from Jesus that they will hold the two most prestigious positions when Jesus comes into power. Even at the Last Supper they are caught arguing among themselves about who is the most important. This prompts Jesus to wash their feet as a model for how they are to seek greatness.

The Mediterranean culture today, as at the time of Jesus, has a much different system of loyalty than that found in the west. For the disciples and people of their culture, their loyalty was strongly tied to the leader, Jesus, but much less on one another. From this perspective, the arguing between them, even at the Last Supper, is

understandable. That atmosphere would have persisted after Jesus' death until they could work out among themselves where and in whom they would place their loyalties.

The text too contains elements showing that this struggle is being worked out among them. In John's description of the Good Shepherd, he says that the gatekeeper lets in the one whom he identifies as the good shepherd. The good shepherd is further described as the one who walks ahead and leads the sheep.

Recall after the arrest of Jesus when he is taken to the house of the high priest. The beloved disciple is described in terms that parallel the role of the good shepherd. Both Peter and the beloved disciple follow Jesus, but it is the beloved disciple who is permitted to enter the inner courtyard. He speaks to the gatekeeper who brings Peter in. The beloved disciple is described as the one who follows Jesus through the gate. It is he who is recognized by the gatekeeper and is permitted to enter. Lastly it is he who leads, who goes before Peter and leads him into the courtyard (John 18:15-27). John's description of Jesus' celebration of the Passover meal with his disciples also places John in the most significant role. It is John, the beloved, who sits next to Jesus. Jesus indicates the identity of the betrayer to him. Peter then asks the beloved disciple about whom Jesus was speaking (John 13:21-30). Both of these texts suggest that John was casting the beloved disciple in a more favored position.

However, in the Gospel text for this Sunday, their roles change dramatically. Here, it is Peter who is clearly the leader and a person who takes the initiative. He declares that he is going fishing and the other disciples, Thomas, Nathanael, James, John, and two other unnamed disciples follow. When the disciples encounter Jesus after a long night of fishing, it is John who first recognizes that the person on the shore is Jesus. But it is Peter who jumps into the water to join Jesus. At the invitation of Jesus to bring some of their catch to the meal, it is Peter who alone drags the net full of fish. After the breakfast, it is Peter that Jesus turns to with the question, "do you love me?" In this dialogue Jesus gives Peter the role of caring for his flock. Peter has become the Good Shepherd. We can only wonder what took place in the early Christian community that led to Peter taking on this role. That this text is being proclaimed as a Gospel for this important feast testifies that God continues to work in the church and in communities, even in difficult struggles.

### **Reflection Questions:**

1. What is your experience of your family dynamics? Did one child seem to be favored by your mom or your dad? Were there times when you and your brother or sister competed for attention? What was your role in those family relationships?
2. How do you feel about the politics within the church as preparations are being made to elect a new pope?
3. Why do you think Peter might have decided to go fishing? What do you think you would have done in the days after the resurrection?
4. Are you surprised that the disciples did not recognize Jesus from the very start?
5. Do you always recognize the presence of Jesus in your own life?
6. What are some of things that help you to recognize Jesus' presence?
7. What are some reasons why Jesus would ask Peter three times, "do you love me?"
8. Have you ever asked someone if they love you? Have you ever asked God if God loves you?
9. Why did Jesus ask Peter to feed his lambs?
10. Can you take some time to talk openly with God about whatever it is that stirs within you from this Gospel?

The Gospel background and reflection questions are written by Fr. Paul Gallagher, OFM. They are edited by Sister Anne Marie Lom, OSF and Joe Thiel. The excerpts from the Sunday readings are prepared by Joe Thiel. To be added to the distribution list, send your name and email address to [annemarie.lom@gmail.com](mailto:annemarie.lom@gmail.com)

Our Gospel Reflections are hosted by the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity. Their homepage is <https://fscs-calledtobe.org/>. One link there is labeled Franciscan Gospel Reflections. A click on the icon will take you to the Gospel reflections for the upcoming Sunday. By following this link, you will be able to blog or

comment on the reflection questions. The material will be posted on Fridays and will be available until the following Friday when the new material is posted.

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### **Excerpts from the readings for May 4, 2025, the Third Sunday of Easter**

The apostles were brought in before the Sanhedrin. The high priest questioned them, "We gave you strict orders to stop teaching in that name. Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and want to bring this man's blood upon us." But Peter and the apostles said, "We must obey God rather than men. The God of our ancestors raised Jesus, though you had him killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him at his right hand as savior to grant Israel repentance and forgiveness of sins. We are witnesses of these things." The Sanhedrin ordered the apostles to stop speaking in the name of Jesus, and dismissed them. They left, rejoicing that they had been found worthy to suffer dishonor for the sake of the name.

*I will praise you, Lord, for you drew me clear and did not let my enemies rejoice over me. You brought me up from the netherworld; you preserved me from among those going down into the pit. Sing praise to the Lord, you his faithful ones, and give thanks to his holy name. For his anger lasts but a moment; a lifetime, his good will. At nightfall, weeping enters in, but with the dawn, rejoicing. Hear, O Lord, and have pity on me; O Lord, be my helper. You changed my mourning into dancing; O Lord, my God, forever will I give you thanks.*

I looked and heard the voices of angels who surrounded the throne and the creatures and the elders. They were countless in number, and they cried out in a loud voice: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches, wisdom and strength, honor and glory and blessing." Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, everything in the universe, cry out: "To the one who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor, glory and might, forever and ever." The four living creatures answered, "Amen," and the elders fell down and worshiped.

Jesus revealed himself again to his disciples at the Sea of Tiberias. Together were Simon Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, Zebedee's sons, and two others. Simon Peter said, "I am going fishing." They said, "We also will come with you." So they went out, but that night they caught nothing. At dawn, Jesus was standing on the shore; but they did not realize that it was Jesus. He said, "Have you caught anything?" They answered, "No." He said, "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. The disciple whom Jesus loved said, "It is the Lord." When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he jumped into the sea. The other disciples came in the boat, for they were not far from shore, 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, "Bring some of the fish you just caught." So Simon Peter 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, "Come, have breakfast." Jesus took the bread and the fish and gave it to them. This was now the third time Jesus was revealed to his disciples after being raised from the dead. When they had finished, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, do you love me more than these?" Simon Peter answered him, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my lambs." He then said a second time, "Simon, do you love me?" Simon Peter answered him, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Tend my sheep." Jesus said to him the third time, "Simon, do you love me?"

Peter said, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep. 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."

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

Friends,

Here are the Gospel background and reflection questions for May 4th, as prepared by Franciscan spiritual director Fr. Paul Gallagher. In the Gospel from John, Jesus reveals himself to his disciples for a third time after his resurrection. They are returning at the dawn, after they have gone fishing at night but caught nothing. "Cast your net over the right side," he tells them, and they make a catch they cannot even pull aboard. Jesus then gives them a breakfast of bread and fish to eat that he has prepared over a fire. He asks Simon Peter, "Do you love me," and tells him to "Feed my sheep."

The other readings also have direct references to the apostles' obedience to God in carrying on their work in the face of opposition from the Sanhedrin, the saving Lord bringing rejoicing at the dawn, angels proclaiming, "Worthy is the Lamb," and the people giving honor and glory. In the first reading from the Acts of the Apostles, the apostles are brought before the Sanhedrin, who ordered the apostles to stop speaking in the name of Jesus, and they reply, "We must obey God who raised Jesus as our leader and savior." Psalm 30 acclaims, "You preserved me from among those going down into the pit. At nightfall, weeping enters in, but with the dawn, rejoicing. Sing praise!" In the second reading, from Revelation, John writes, "I heard the angels cry out, 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches, wisdom and strength, honor and glory and blessing,' and every creature cried out, 'To the one on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing, honor and glory, forever and ever.'"

Today, like all through the Easter Season until we celebrate the Ascension and Pentecost, our readings are from Acts, Revelation, and John. For point in-time context, the first reading's scene with the apostles happens after Jesus' ascension and after the descent of the Holy Spirit. The second reading describing John's vision in the book of Revelation was written years after the events of the first reading. The Gospel scene on the lakeshore ends with a statement repeating to Peter some of the first words Jesus ever spoke to the fishermen who became his first disciples: "Follow me."

Joe

> i < May the Word light your way each day!