

Third Sunday of Easter C2022

Today's Gospel is very rich and contains a lot of images that would be worthwhile explaining, like boat, fish, net, breakfast, etc. Unfortunately, I cannot do that without taking all of your time to celebrate with your children and families. In order to spare you all the details, I want to make this homily very simple and short. Let me start with the anecdote of a hundred dollars bill. Here it is:

There is a story of a man who presented in front of an audience a hundred dollars bill. He asked them if someone would like to have it. Spontaneously, almost everybody raised the hand and wanted the money. Then, he said: Ok, but before giving it away you should see what I do with it. At that time, he crumpled the money in his hands to the point that it was all wrinkled. He asked again if anyone would still like to have it. Without doubt, people wanted it. For the last time, he threw the money on the ground and trampled it with his shoes to the point it became all dirty. When he asked if people still wanted it, hands rose again in order to have the money.

Now here is my question: Why would these people want to have a bill that was so dirty and crumpled? The answer is very simple: it is because, in spite of its crease and dirt, its value was not diminished. It was still a hundred dollars bill, a lot of money.

The anecdote of a hundred dollars bill is similar to the story of Peter. We know what happened to him, how in the heat of the Passion of our Lord, he denied him three times. Humanly speaking, Peter showed such a weakness that he openly lied to not knowing Jesus. Now by asking Peter three times if he loved him, Our Lord wanted to erase his denials, to reassure him that he is forgiven and redeemed of his past. In spite of his denial, he is worth more than what he has done.

Such an episode teaches us that when Christ forgives us, we become pure. In spite of our indignity and unworthiness, we are never worthless before God. Our value does not depend on what we have done, but on God who loves us above all in spite of our past life. It also teaches us that the leader, in spite of his human weaknesses and short comings, can always count on the Lord who chose him to stand for his people. Though he is an ordinary person, nevertheless with the Lord's help in his life, he can accomplish extraordinary things.

In other words, Peter really does love our Lord. But, he remains a weak and sinful person, perhaps like each one of us. But, that does not make any difference to Jesus. Then we understand why after the triple questions to Peter, our Lord asks him to feed his sheep. Literally that means that he gives him the responsibility of being the leader of his church. He puts him in charge in order to nurture, support and guide the sheep as he himself did. Our Lord wanted him to be the leader and the shepherd, tending the flock with the same tenderness, love and compassion like him.

Because this duty is assumed on behalf of our Lord, it is he who is leading and guiding. In case of difficulties and troubled time, our Lord himself will intervene so that the lack of success becomes success, so that the mission may not die.

Such an intervention of our Lord was already evidenced in the miraculous catching of fish. The disciples have worked all night long without catching anything. But, when they obeyed the injunction of our Lord, they caught a lot of fish.

We have to bear in mind that those guys who were fishing, were experts in their job. They certainly knew how and when to fish, and in which circumstances to hope for a good catch. For that reason they went fishing in the night. However, in spite of all their skills, knowledge and talents, they were unsuccessful.

This episode teaches us that, as good as we might be in our undertakings and jobs, as skilled and talented as we might be, we are always vulnerable, at the mercy of a possible failure. We cannot only count on our hard work and talent in order to succeed. We need the Lord to lend us his hand in our business, job, family, projects, etc. That is the only way our success can be guaranteed. It is for that reason, I believe, that a good leader is the one who is always on his knees before the Lord, in prayer, asking him wisdom and discernment on how he can conduct his affairs according to God's will.

Let me now finish with some recommendations. First, we need to open our eyes, ears and hearts wide to see, hear and experience the Risen Lord coming to us in various circumstances of life. We often fail to acknowledge the presence of our Lord behind our unexpected victories, great achievements, job promotions, miraculous healings, and success in relationships. Let us not attribute a success in our career only to hard work; our good health only to daily exercise coupled with moderation in food and drink; our sound financial position only to frugal spending habits and good management of money.

Second, our Lord is present in our midst right now as he was present to the disciples fishing. He is present in our pain and suffering. He often visits us in our accidents, illnesses and loss of the loved ones; in pain and problems of relationship. Let us recognize his presence in our midst now as we gather for the celebration of the Holy Mass. May he bless you all!

Acts 5: 27-32, 40b-41; Revelation 5: 11-14; John 20: 1-19



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