

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, 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." Words from our Gospel today from the 21st chapter of the Gospel according to St. John – sisters and brothers, may the Lord give to you his peace and his joy.

After first Holy Communion practice, the children were invited to the parish hall for some snacks. At the head of the table was a large pile of apples. The director of religious education had posted the following note next to the apple tray: "Take only ONE. God is watching." Further along, one of the First Communicants spotted a large pile of chocolate chip cookies and quickly posted the following note, "Take all you want. God is watching the apples."

Research gathered by Joe Paprocki tells us that the majority of us experience regular cravings for specific foods. Now that we are in the season of Easter and have found our Easter Baskets, perhaps we are craving the sweet goodness of chocolate more than usual. I know that I am. It's important to remember that hunger and cravings are not synonymous. The former is driven by the body, while the latter is driven by the mind. Hunger seeks to satisfy a physical need; a craving seeks to satisfy an emotional one. That's why cravings are not limited to food. We can find ourselves craving any and all of the following: a drink, sleep, sex, power, possessions, friendship, novelty, intimacy, contentment, fun, pleasure, adventure... The list goes on. The bottom line is that cravings seek to fulfill a sense of incompleteness within ourselves. While hunger is for survival, cravings are for satisfaction: to fill a fundamental lack, flaw, or sense of inadequacy. Certain cues trigger our emotional response, which heightens our desire. Chemicals in the brain, such as dopamine, are released and narrow our focus to that one thing that we believe will satisfy us, that thing we are craving for, and in giving ourselves over to this desire, we hope that we will successfully transcend our present feeling of incompleteness to one of fulfillment, even if temporary.

Our own experience leads us to discover, however, that we are incapable of fulfilling and sustaining ourselves amidst all our cravings. This is what Peter discovered in the Gospel today, when he declared in his restlessness, "I'm going fishing." Indeed, before meeting Jesus, fishing was the only life Peter had ever known. And while the risen Jesus had appeared to Peter and the disciples a few times already, Peter wasn't sure what to make of it. He felt something lacking in himself and was craving for something more. Perhaps, it was a longing for the good old days when things seemed simple and familiar. Perhaps, he felt that he lost his purpose, and so Peter was trying

to regain it again by doing something meaningful instead of sitting around. I suppose we could insert any number of activities from our own lives here. I'm off to soccer practice, off to school, off to work, off to the living room to watch TV, hoping that getting lost in the busyness of our endeavor of (quote unquote) fishing, whatever that looks like will cure our deepest longings. And what happened to Peter? Once again out fishing, Peter caught nothing. The cravings we experience are not wrong, but how we choose to satisfy them often leaves us empty still. Our world craves so much, and is always wanting more. At our deepest level, we are incapable of fulfilling and sustaining ourselves.

For good or ill, we have been made with an infinite hole in our hearts, a hole that can only be filled by the infinite God. St. Augustine declares, "You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You." This brings us to the Sacrament of the Eucharist, the true 'food' that promises to satisfy our deepest cravings. In John's Gospel, Jesus declares of himself, "I am the bread of life. Whoever eats this bread will never go hungry and whoever believes in me will never thirst." The crowd that gathered around Jesus, implored him, "Sir, give us this bread always." In today's Gospel, Jesus' responds to our deepest cravings: "Peter, feed my sheep."

When we come forward to receive Holy Communion and feed upon the Bread of Life that is Jesus himself, a simple dynamic takes place. The minister holds up the host and the chalice and says, "The Body of Christ; the Blood of Christ." Our response – "Amen" – is our declaration that this is indeed the only food and drink that will satisfy our hunger and thirst. As he did for Peter, Jesus asks us also in this exchange, "Do you love me more than these?" To say *Amen* to the Body of Christ is to acknowledge that of all the options that life offers us, the Bread of Life is the only food that will satisfy our hungry hearts. We have many cravings and desires. We get distracted. We reach out to many things. We might often crave chocolate, but just because God is watching the apples, doesn't mean we should have as many chocolate chip cookies as would like and for every meal no less; we would get sick otherwise. There is one craving, however, that we can give in to again and again, and that is the Eucharist. A steady diet of the Eucharist, week after week, day after day is good for us. Experiencing in ourselves the craving for something more, which we recognize ultimately as the longing for Christ himself, and recognizing the emptiness of all other things besides, hopefully, we can let ourselves be fed on the true bread of life, as we too declare, "Yes, Lord, you know everything - you know that I love you."¹

¹ Inspired and content by Joe Paprocki, *Living the Sacraments: Finding God at the Intersection of Heaven and Earth* (Chicago, IL: Loyola Press, 2018), pgs. 49-64.

Third Sunday of Easter

Lectionary: 48
Reading I

Acts 5:27-32, 40b-41

When the captain and the court officers had brought the apostles in
and made them stand before the Sanhedrin,
the high priest questioned them,
“We gave you strict orders, did we not,
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 in reply,
“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 leader and savior
to grant Israel repentance and forgiveness of sins.
We are witnesses of these things,
as is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him.”

The Sanhedrin ordered the apostles
to stop speaking in the name of Jesus, and dismissed them.
So they left the presence of the Sanhedrin,
rejoicing that they had been found worthy
to suffer dishonor for the sake of the name.
Responsorial Psalm

Ps 30:2, 4, 5-6, 11-12, 13

R (2a) I will praise you, Lord, for you have rescued me.

or:

R Alleluia.

I will extol you, O LORD, for you drew me clear

and did not let my enemies rejoice over me.

O LORD, you brought me up from the netherworld;

you preserved me from among those going down into the pit.

R I will praise you, Lord, for you have rescued me.

or:

R Alleluia.

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.

R I will praise you, Lord, for you have rescued me.

or:

R Alleluia.

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.

R I will praise you, Lord, for you have rescued me.

or:

R Alleluia.

Reading II

Rev 5:11-14

I, John, looked and heard the voices of many angels
who surrounded the throne

and the living 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.
Alleluia

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Christ is risen, creator of all;
he has shown pity on all people.

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

Jn 21:1-19 or 21:1-14

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?”

Simon Peter answered him, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.”

Jesus said to him, “Feed my lambs.”

He then said to Simon Peter a second time,

“Simon, son of John, do you love me?”

Simon Peter answered him, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.”

Jesus said to him, “Tend my sheep.”

Jesus said to him the third time,

“Simon, son of John, do you love me?”

Peter was distressed that Jesus 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.”

OR

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