

In Nomine Iesu

Easter 1, *Quasimodogeniti* 2023

Our Lord nourishes us whenever we are with Him - John 21:1-14

“After this Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias, and he revealed himself in this way. Simon Peter, Thomas (called the Twin), Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples were together. Simon Peter said to them, ‘I am going fishing.’ They said to him, ‘We will go with you.’ They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. Just as day was breaking, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, ‘Children, do you have any fish?’ They answered him, ‘No.’ He said to them, ‘Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some.’ So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in, because of the quantity of fish. That disciple whom Jesus loved therefore said to Peter, ‘It is the Lord!’ When Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment, for he was stripped for work, and threw himself into the sea. The other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, but about a hundred yards off. When they got out on land, they saw a charcoal fire in place, with fish laid out on it, and bread. Jesus said to them, ‘Bring some of the fish that you have just caught.’ So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, 153 of them. And although there were so many, the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, ‘Come and have breakfast. Now none of the disciples dared ask him, ‘Who are you?’ They knew it was the Lord. Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and so with the fish. This was now the third time that Jesus was revealed to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.”

Grace be to you and peace from God the Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who provides for those who are His. Dear fellow redeemed in Christ:

Whenever Jesus appeared after His resurrection and before His ascension, He did and said things that were important for His disciples. St. Luke wrote in the Acts of the Apostles that “He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during the forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.” (Acts 1:3) During these appearances Jesus spoke peace to their downcast and broken hearts. But He did more than that. He spoke forgiveness to their hurting consciences. He spoke spiritual life to their troubled souls. He spoke conviction to their wills. He spoke wisdom and knowledge to their minds. In short, He nourished them richly every time He was with them.

I

Such is the case with the account before us this morning. Seven of the twelve had gone to Galilee, as Jesus had told them to do through the women who came to the tomb early that Easter morning. The disciples apparently had not been able to bring themselves to go to Galilee earlier, for as we know they did not leave Jerusalem. They continued to take refuge in the upper room not just on that first Easter evening but even the Sunday evening a week later when Thomas was with them. Perhaps they were reluctant to leave Jerusalem for fear that they would be going still further away from Him. But His visits to them in their fear and doubt clearly strengthened them, enough so that they considered anew and in faith what He had said to them through the women.

Now, there in Galilee beside the Sea of Tiberias – the old fishing grounds of Peter and Andrew, James and John - they waited. It isn't recorded that Jesus told them where to wait. Maybe He did and maybe He didn't. He only said, 'Galilee,' which is a pretty big place to wait around for Him. But it is interesting to note that they waited for Him where the first of them, Peter and Andrew, James and John, had first been called to leave their nets and follow Him to be fishers of men.

Restless, Peter said, "I am going fishing." And the rest – no doubt as restless as he, and hungry as well – said, "We will go with you." One wonders if, through that long, dark night, any of them reminisced about that other dark night three and half years earlier when they had caught nothing ... until morning, when the friendly neighborhood carpenter came to them and said, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." (Luke 5:4) The Jesus they'd known back then was a familiar neighbor. But they hadn't grasped that He was the promised Messiah. It is hard to believe that Peter hadn't talked about this to Thomas, Nathanael, and the other two, who had not been there back then. But now, as they neared shore in the early light of dawn with their nets empty they did not recognize the man who called to them from the shore asking whether they had any fish. Now, when they knew, because of Jesus' death and resurrection, that He was not just the familiar carpenter, but the very Messiah promised to Israel, the incarnate Son of God, they do not recognize Him, at least at first. Do you see the irony that the youngest and least experienced of them, John, recognizes Him first, and Peter does not?

But do you also see that when Peter hears from John, "It is the Lord," how eager He is to go to Jesus? He cannot wait for the boat to get to shore. He has no regard for the huge catch. He only wants to be with the Lord, be with Him again this third time after His resurrection, be with Him whom He had denied three times. So, he jumps into the sea. Such is the nature of faith. As for John, he had come to know Jesus' voice, as a sheep of the Good Shepherd would do. He didn't need to see Him clearly. Jesus' word and command were enough. But Peter, once He knew **who** called him, immediately wanted to be with Him, and be reinstated – which would soon happen. As we look at John and Peter that day at the Sea of Galilee, we learn much about the nature of faith and its relationship to our Savior and Lord, as I am sure did the other disciples in the boat with Peter and John.

II

The disciples no doubt enjoyed their mealtimes – and all times - with Jesus during the forty days. They no doubt could see the great value of what Jesus gave to them and did for them, while He was with them. So, we might think that when the forty days were over, and Jesus ascended before their eyes to the right hand of the Father, and thereafter was no longer visibly present with them, no longer sitting at table with them for a meal, that this would have caused them sorrow, a longing for what they lost. We might expect them to be discouraged, weakened, and downcast before God. But that is **not** what happened. At the very end of his Gospel, St. Luke describes **what did happen** when Jesus ascended to heaven: "He led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands He blessed them. While He blessed them, He parted from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with **great joy**, and were continually in the temple blessing God." (Luke 24:50-52)

Jesus' visible departure from them was not a cause for sadness because He was actually still with them, **at table** – but now in a different way. Jesus' institution of the Lord's Supper now became for the apostles, and for all Jesus' followers, a new focal point for being with Him, being at table with Him and nourished by Him. The New Testament does not give any examples of the disciples observing the Lord's Supper before the ascension, except for Jesus' own institution of it on the night in which He was betrayed and His revealing Himself in **the breaking of bread** to the Emmaus disciples. This makes sense, since an important part of this sacrament as Jesus established it, is the remembrance of Him, the Savior crucified for us.

Before the ascension, Jesus was right there with them, visiting them, speaking with them, sitting at table with them. You don't testify in remembrance of someone who is there in front of you. No, you remember the absent one, the one whom you no longer can see. After his ascension, Jesus was indeed absent as far as any eye could see. So, remembering Him now made sense, and so the disciples, together with all who believed the teaching of the Lord and His apostles, now began to observe the Supper He commanded, and through which He promised to be with them, with us, intimately, personally, forgiving our sins and nourishing our faith.

We are told in the Book of Acts that members of that first Christian congregation in Jerusalem, “devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the **breaking of bread** and the prayers.” Remember that Jesus is God in human flesh. So, unlike ordinary human beings, Jesus, God and man, is able to be present in more than one place at a time, and in more than one way. Therefore, Jesus can be at the right hand of God the Father, reigning over and governing the universe, and **at the same time** reigning over and governing His people with grace and mercy in the Lord's Supper until the end of the age, as He promised.

Mealtime visits from Jesus were now going to be more intensely intimate than they had been before – for all who believed in Him. Jesus would be with them now, not merely to provide fish at the shore, but to feed them supernaturally with Himself, wherever they gathered in His name. After the ascension, Jesus would speak His words indirectly, through the lips of His called ministers, and not directly through His own lips. That is why He commanded His Church to “Do this in remembrance of Me,” **speaking both to those who administer and those who receive**. But they would still be Jesus' words, with all their divine, creative, and forgiving power.

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St. Luke, in the Book of Acts, describing the apostle Paul's visit to the church in Troas, tells us that “on the first day of the week - Sunday, when we were gathered together to **break bread**, talked with them, intending to depart the next day ... and continued his message until midnight.” (Acts 20:7) That was a long sermon! Yet it was not delivered **instead** of the **breaking of the bread** of the Lord's Supper, but **together** with it. You see, all the apostles, even this last one, Paul, remembered well Jesus' words, “wherever two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them.” Dear friends, whenever we are gathered in Jesus' name, He is present to **speak to us** and **nourish us** just as He did at the shore of the Sea of Galilee that day with the seven who went there to the place where our Lord told them He would be present with them and for them. We are here today for the very same purpose, to hear Him and be nourished richly by Him. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria