

Christ is risen! **He is risen indeed, Alleluia!**

As follows in Jesus' name:

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 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 grieved because He said to him the 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. Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go." (This He said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.) And after saying this He said to him, "Follow Me."

Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them, the one who also had leaned back against Him during the supper and had said, "Lord, who is it that is going to betray You?" When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, "Lord, what about this man?" Jesus said to him, "If it is My will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow Me!" So the saying spread abroad among the brothers that this disciple was not to die; yet Jesus did not say to him that he was not to die, but, "If it is My will that he remain until I come, what is that to you?"

This is the disciple who is bearing witness about these things, and who has written these things, and we know that his testimony is true.

Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. (ESV)

*This is Your Word, heavenly Father; **sanctify us in the truth, Your Word is Truth.** Amen.* (John 17:17)

It had been a long night of fishing. A lot of work without any reward.

But when Jesus offered them some professional fishing advice, they took it, even if reluctantly.

And what a difference it made! A net full of fish.

Seeing this, Peter immediately acts -

He... **fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."**

Remember that? That was 3 years prior to our text.

That was Peter's natural reaction to being in Jesus' presence the first time he received such a catch.

At that time, Jesus declined Peter's request, instead inviting him to become a "**fisher of men.**"

What a difference 3 years can make... Now how does Peter respond to the miraculous catch?

He is so excited to see Jesus, he jumps into the water and swims to Him.

He is still the same sinful man who deserves none of Jesus' grace or forgiveness,

but now He knows where to go to get that undeserved grace and forgiveness - the Savior Himself.

We see in Peter's learned, Christian response that he knows he is forgiven.

He had already seen his Savior who died AND ROSE to secure his salvation...

Who had already declared, "**Peace be with you,**" two times prior in His meeting with the apostles.

Peter knew he was forgiven.

But for an Apostle, for one who had been called to publicly preach Jesus as the Christ,

to deny the very One he is to preach, a public reinstatement is called for - and so Jesus sets to work.

Remember how bold Peter had been putting himself above all the other disciples on Maundy Thur....

St. Matthew recorded the conversation:

Jesus said to them, “You will all fall away because of Me this night.

For it is written, ‘I will strike the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.’

But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.”

Peter answered Him, “Though they all fall away because of You, I will never fall away.”

**Jesus said to him, “Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows,
you will deny Me three times.”**

Peter said to Him, “Even if I must die with You, I will not deny You!”St. Matthew 26:31-35

Listen to Peter’s self-confidence. It was sinful.

He was not listening to His Lord... but asserting and glorifying himself... that he knew better, and clearly considered himself to be superior to the other apostles, as if he loved Jesus more.

And yet, it was Peter who did not confess, but denied even knowing His Lord.

He had been that hireling who saw the wolf coming and fled.

Now, it can seem harsh of Jesus, not just to ask Peter 3 times, “**Do you love Me?**”,

but even more so, to add that line “**Do you love Me – more than these (disciples do)?**”

You can bet that Peter’s mind went back to that night and his sinful pride and arrogance.

But listen to St. Peter’s response:

it is no longer boldly asserting himself and his devotion, for his own glory,
instead, the emphasis is on Jesus, “**You know that I love You.**”

And by the 3rd time, St. Peter even adds, “**Lord, You know everything; You know that I love You,**”
emphasizing Jesus’ divine omniscience, knowing all things.

Again, it seems harsh that Jesus would bring Peter’s denial up again,

but it wasn’t simply to dredge up the past and make Peter feel bad.

Instead, it was to give Peter (and the other Apostles) confidence and certainty
that the Lord called Peter to be an Apostle.

Otherwise, the Jews he preached to might have heard of his denials and questioned his legitimacy.

Otherwise, the other Apostles might have been uncertain.

Otherwise, you know that Satan would have been accusing his conscience,

“You aren’t worthy of this calling. You denied your Savior in His darkest hour.”

But Jesus, the Good Shepherd, does not desire that any uncertainty would hinder his Apostle.

And so He quashes all such accusations here and now.

He doesn’t overlook Peter’s sin. He doesn’t sweep it under the rug to bring it up at Judgment Day.

No, He acknowledges it, that He knows that it happened – just as He had foretold –

and that He had laid down His life of it. St. Peter is forgiven it and reinstated into this public office.

In other words, the Good Shepherd left the 99 and went after the one lost sheep
and when He had found him, He carried him back home to the rest of the flock.

And by telling him to “**Feed His lambs... Tend His sheep... Feed His sheep,**”

not only was St. Peter to be a fisher of men, but a shepherd, a pastor.

He was not just to bring the people into the Church, but he was to care for their souls,

to nourish them on the green pastures of God’s Word, just as he had been nourished and cared for.

As he had heard Jesus preach, so he was to preach:

to show the proud, the arrogant, the impenitent their sins, so that they might be led to repent;
to show the humbled, the chastised, the penitent their Savior, so that they might believe in Him;
to call back the erring, to bind up the wounded, to guide the faithful, to find the lost.

...
Jesus even gave St. Peter a glimpse of his future,

to show him by what kind of death he was to glorify God.

St. Peter had previously said, **“Even if I must die with You, I will not deny You!”**

But that was said when St. Peter was speaking to glorify himself, holding himself above the others.

Now Jesus was confirming that he would die for Jesus, but his confession would glorify God.

...
Dearly beloved by your Good Shepherd,

It is good, right and salutary, that we should give thanks to God for this Gospel.

By it He warns us about our own arrogance and self-glorifying pride.

Within a month’s time, we will have the public confession of not only 5 youth, but also 3 adults,
and 2 of them through Baptism.

Think back to your own baptism,

and for those of you who are confirmed, think back to your confirmation day.

It is easy, while we are surrounded by Christians and not under the fear of death to confess our Savior.

It is easy to be bold and to think that we will never deny Him.

It is easy, while we are in the habit of regularly attending to His Word through devotions,
attendance at the Divine Service, and in instruction class to think that we could never disown Him.

And yet, you see the example of the Apostles, who fled from their Savior,
and of Peter, who publicly denied Him.

You see the example of many of your confirmation or Christianity 101 classmates,
who, for many & various temptations, are no longer attending to the Word and Sacraments with you.

It is with good reason that the Church teaches her confirmands to say,

I do so intend, with the help of God, when answering such questions as:
Do you ... intend to continue steadfast in the confession of this Church, and suffer all, even death,
rather than fall away from it?

For it is not by our own strength of will or conviction that we remain faithful,

but by God’s help and strength, by His work of the Holy Spirit to make us bold to confess our Savior,
whether in “life or death” situations, or just in a conversation with a co-worker or classmate.

How is it, then, that the Holy Spirit continues His work in you to keep you steadfast?

How is it that your Good Shepherd calls you back when you stray or even disown Him?

Jesus, once again, gives you the answer. Speaking to Peter, He said: **“Follow Me.”**

We follow Him as learned-St. Peter, who jumped in the water to get to Jesus.

We eagerly dive into our Baptism to be in His presence and to be covered by Him.

We follow Him as He said, His Sheep listen to His voice.

We follow Him by hearing and trusting His Word,

His words of warning, admonishment, and guidance,

His words of absolution and peace...

He knows His own and will not leave them straying, but calls them to His one flock
to be and remain with Him and His Father forever.

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Soli Deo Gloria