

**3<sup>rd</sup> SUNDAY OF EASTER YEAR C HOMILY 2022**  
**A FISHING EXPEDITION, A BIG CATCH AND A MEAL TOGETHER WITH PETER**  
**COMMISSIONED AS LEADER**

*Jn 21.1-19*

*AA 5.27-32, 40-41*

*Apoc 5.11-14*

Now for the turnaround with Peter moving from enthusiastic and humble, but fearful and denying apostle in the darkness, to fisherman in the boat to metaphorical shepherd back on the land. It's quite a transformation for one who can say the right things, but then back out when the going gets tough, as they say. Peter's enthusiasm and spontaneous impulsivity is to the fore again, as he leaps into the waters of chaos, heading for a further personal encounter with the Risen Jesus. At the same time, we know his is a love that is to be tested in the future, as he faces hostility and opposition as did Jesus in his ministry.

Peter seems to resent or at least be surprised at Jesus questioning him 3 times about his love for him, probably a reaction to Peter's earlier three times denial of even knowing Jesus, after the Agony in the Garden. But he reflects his humanity and natural weakness, with which we can all relate in one way or another. In the end, as tradition would have it, Peter himself suffers martyrdom after he reaches Rome at the end of Acts of the Apostles, but only after much action and growth along the way, despite adversity.

Luke has a similar story early in his Gospel, and this one is an addition to the earlier ending of John's Gospel we heard last week. The symbolism of fish and then sheep has continued throughout Christian history, as a reminder of unity in diversity and the need for good pastoral care, remembering that we don't have to take the sheep metaphor too far, as we need to think for ourselves and make our own decisions, using free will and a well-informed conscience in a responsible way.

Here we end up with another meal scene, where Jesus distributes the bread and the fish once more. It all prefigures our gathering for Eucharist in our diversity as a faith community, spiritually nourished by the Bread of Life on our own individual journeys, reminded that this is 'Bread for the Broken', and so there for our renewal and perseverance in living the Christian life according to the Gospel Jesus proclaims. His presence endures wherever we gather in his name, hear his Word, and share the Eucharistic meal.

Once again, the apostles don't recognize the Risen Jesus at first, and it is John himself, 'The Beloved Disciple', who is the first to acknowledge "***It is the Lord!***"! As they gather around Jesus, the message is clear that their mission is to continue, guided by his Spirit, already granted in that earlier scene when they are gathered together in the locked room. So, once again, here we move from fear to faith, enthusiasm and joy in his presence.

Questions have been raised about the significance of 153 fish. One of my parishioners at Asquith, the late and lovely John Burke, who was a keen fisherman on the Hawkesbury River, suggested that that was the number of varieties of fish in the Sea of Galilee at the time! A fair guess, but I suspect more likely symbolic of diversity and yet togetherness in the evolving and growing Christian communities at the time of John's Gospel, remembering that this was probably some time after 100AD, so over 2 generations after the time of Jesus. Why 153 is specified is anyone's guess!! Says Silvester O'Flynn OFM Cap: "*The net was not broken, a sign of unity in a community of diverse cultures and races.*"

Brendan Byrne SJ suggests it was reflective of an ancient belief that there were 153 separate nations in the world back then, so maybe foreshadowing "*the worldwide mission of the Church*", which still has a long, long way to go! Dr Google tells me that there are currently 197 countries in the world, including the Holy See, but Siri tells me 195! Of a current world population of nearly 7 billion, 2.2 billion, or about 33% are Christian and 1 billion or 20% Catholic, at least in name!

The teachings of Jesus and associated stories were passed on by word of mouth, and then written down within the developing communities, ultimately put together by the evangelists, reflecting their own emphases and the needs of the groups of believers with whom they were involved. Hence the variations, but yet consistent themes of the call to discipleship for all who believed. The underlying message of the call to love God and neighbour is ever present, and relevant throughout the ages, as we well know.

The ongoing problem, of course, is the failure of so-called Christians to practise the message that they profess to believe. The eucharistic overtones of today's meal, as a cooked breakfast on the lakeshore, where Jesus takes the bread and then the fish and shares them around, sets the pattern for Eucharistic gatherings in the future and also can be taken as a broader reminder that resources are to be shared,

particularly to serve those in need, as we see in the mission of the early Church, described by Luke in Acts of the Apostles. And so that mission continues with us now.

And so now we move to profess faith, pray, give thanks and be nourished by Eucharist as we gather once more in faith and love.

*john hannon*

*MAYDAY*

*1<sup>st</sup> May 2022*