

Homily
Third Sunday of Easter 5/5/19
Fr Danny

In today's Gospel, Jesus is approaching His disciples in a new way. Remember that Jesus has just died, and they had spent the last night of His life with Him at the Last Supper and at the Garden of Gethsemane, and He had told Peter, "Peter by the time the cock crows, you will have denied Me three times." And Peter says, "No, no way Lord. No way will I ever deny you." Denial, denial, denial, the cock crows.

In today's Gospel though, the apostles see the loving mercy of the Father shown through the Son. That when Peter comes to Jesus in today's Gospel, Jesus asks him not once, not twice, but three times, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" In a way, to atone for those three times that he denied Him in his life.

And it reminds you and I of that same opportunity, in our own lives. When we fall, when we falter many times, we follow the same path as the apostles did in today's reading. Remember when Jesus called Peter, James, and John the first time, what were they doing? Fishing. Now, they had already seen the risen Lord twice, but they fell into despair, so what did they do? They went back to what they knew best. They went fishing, and in spite of that, Jesus did not give up on them.

In fact, Peter, when he saw Jesus, he pulled a "Forrest Gump!" He jumps out of the boat. He doesn't wait for the boat to get to shore, even though it's only about as far away as from here to the Parish Center across the street. It may have taken an extra 5 minutes to pull the boat in. But he jumps off the boat and goes swimming towards the Lord because he sees the Lord, and loves Him. The same way the prodigal son, when the father sees him, the father doesn't just wait there, he runs and the two of them rush into each other's arms and bear hug each other. That's what we see Peter doing in today's Gospel.

Peter's heart is so inflamed with the love of God that he can't just sit around and wait. "Oh, I'll get there eventually, we'll pull the boat in, well allow it to dock, we'll tie it up...No, I've got to go NOW!" And because Jesus saw that fire within Peter, he saw this as an opportunity. "Here, let's eat. Let's have some breakfast." They eat, they break bread.

Then comes the real part of today's Gospel. "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" "Of course I love you." "No, but do you *love* Me?" "Well, of course I love You." "No, no **seriously**, Peter, do you love Me? More than just "liking" Me. More than just choosing Me and preferring Me to your other friends. Do you love Me so much as to put Me before everything else? Do you love the Lord your God with all of your heart, with all of your strength, with all of your soul, with all of your mind? That is the question that I am coming to you with today." And Peter kind of hesitated. "Jesus you know that I love You."

And how many times has He asked us that same question? "Sally, Rita, June, John, Fran, Cathy, do you love Me?" "Of course I do." Well do our lives show it? Sometimes yes, and other times, not so much. Sometimes we're stuck with our minds inside our own heads. Sometimes we're so set on the task before us that we can't do any good. So we fall into that same trap as the apostles did today where we go out fishing and we catch nothing.

There's an analogy there, of how we spend our lives. We're out doing the same thing over and over and over, and not being fishers of men, as Jesus tasked his disciples to be. We are each being tasked as His brothers and sisters, as His sons and daughters to be fishers of men. We have to look at the nets of our lives, how full would they be today. Or would we be like that apostles and have an empty net?

Well Jesus' challenge to us through today's Gospel is to continue to cast that net, because if we cast it wide enough and we are intent enough about it, we will be fishers of men. We can catch people up in the love of God. But you know how it is when you get crochety sometimes, (I know nobody here ever gets crochety...nobody ever gets grumpy – my favorite one of the dwarves, Grumpy) But many times that's how we act in our lives, "I'm a grumpy person! Jesus, I love you, but I'm going to be a grumpy person!" How do we catch people with grumpiness?! Rarely can we catch people with grumpiness.

Which means that we're called not just to a conversion of heart, but to a conversion of mind and a conversion of action as well. It's hard for us to love the Lord without *showing* how much we love the Lord. It's easy for us to say we love the Lord, but without really loving anyone but ourselves.

I was listening to Catholic radio the other day and a caller said, "I'm a devout Christian, and I'm devoted to my faith, but I think if someone wants to have an abortion, they can do it!" Terms do not work that way. Dignity of life

overall because everything that we have in our lives comes from God. If we are a Catholic, if we are a Christian and hold true to those beliefs, then our words, our actions, and our deeds are called to do so as well.

The problem though, is that many times we fall into hypocrisy. That we say one thing and do another. I remember my first summer when I was seminarian assigned to a priest, who said, "Danny, I know I'm a slob, but do what I say not what I do, keep your room clean." And I said, "What? I'm called to learn by example. And if the example I'm given is A, and you want me to live by B, but all I see is A how can I do anything but A?"

At some time in our lives, though, we need to call on one another to be more Catholic, to be more Christian, to be more loving. Yet it's so hard for us to do so, because there aren't many examples of it in our world today. We all struggle with that.

We all at times fall into hypocrisy; I do it more times than I like to admit. As I've mentioned before, that's one of the first things I realized my first year as a priest, was "Oh my gosh. I'm a pharisee! I say one thing and I do another." Ninety five percent-ish of my homilies are preached toward me. Cause I know what to do. We all know what to do. We know what is good and right, and true and just. It's doing it that's the hard part, right? It's getting past that monotony of doing the same thing over and over and over, and expecting different results. It's getting past being insane. Getting past being crazy that takes us into the life of Christ.

So let's look at the life of Christ and see how that can be the image, the model and our guide on how we are each called to live. What did Jesus do in today's gospel that many of us struggle to do? He gave an opportunity for repentance, He gave an opportunity for someone who had wronged Him even though he predicted it – "You're going to deny me three times before the cock crows."- Jesus knew what going to happen, He then still gave the opportunity for Peter to make amends.

How many times when we're wronged, do we give any opportunities for someone to make amends towards us? I don't know about you, but that's hard for me. When I'm stuck in my sin, it's hard for me to love others, its hard for me to like others sometimes. That's what the Lord is calling us to. To love. To forgive, To be faithful. To be merciful towards one another. Not just towards ourselves, though we are sinners.

But it has to start with us. If I can't realize and recognize that God loves me, despite my sins, despite my shortcomings, despite my faults, despite my failures, there's no way on God's green earth I'm going to give anybody else any mercy. That's why I talk about the sacrament of Reconciliation so often. Not because no one's coming, because we have people coming to Reconciliation. But because we often stop there: "I went to Confession – I'm good, I can go out and sin again!" – You're missing the point – but many times that's how we treat it. "Hah! Fresh soul today, nothing can touch me – and then the sin just starts getting attached to me again."

It's like when we go get an oil change, and then we go speeding 95 miles an hour down the highway. "Hey, my engine's not destroyed today!" Ok, true, technically. But should you be going 95 miles an hour down the highway? The correct answer is "No." (Just throwing that out there.) But many times that's how we respond to God. "God thank You so much for loving me, now I can be a sinful person again. Wait – what? But that's how we act!

We go to the sacrament of Reconciliation and then as many of our non-Catholic brothers and sisters say "Catholics sin Monday through Friday, then they go to Confession on Saturday so they can go to Communion on Sunday. It's not always true, but sometimes, for some of us, it is. That we use the sacrament of Reconciliation. We USE it. We don't allow it to change us.

My brothers and sisters, that is what we're called to this day and every day of our lives. To allow that love of God to penetrate our hearts so that we have the same emotion that Simon Peter did today before he was even forgiven. That he was inflamed with the Holy Spirit, that he was inflamed with the love of God before he had received Jesus' mercy and an opportunity for redemption.

My brothers and sisters, this same flame (*referring to the Easter Candle*) that began at the Easter Vigil, during that first Easter celebration, we keep. Or do we put it out throughout the year? "Eh, it's not convenient for me today." "Eh, I'm with my friends and they're not Catholic and they don't like to talk about Catholic things."

We're Catholic in everything that we are or we're Catholic in nothing that we are. And that's a challenge for each and every one of us. I'm not saying this because Oh man, Father just gave a horrible homily this morning, it just kind of hit me between the eyes! My goal here with every homily is to lead each and every

one of us closer to Him (*pointing to the crucifix*) because that's what we're here for.

I was joking around with Deacon and Fran before Mass, saying "Oh, I just don't feel good today, Lord if You're ready, just take me!" They said, don't joke around like that! I said, "I'm not!" I'm ready! Take me! Because that should be our hope every morning of every day.

Because everything we do in our lives is for that reality, not for this one. If we're doing it for this reality, we're doing it for the wrong reason. We're doing it for some sort of selfish gain. If everything we're doing is not for His greater glory, we've got to check ourselves and see, what can I do for God's greater glory today and not for my own?

The world we live in today we're told that greater glory comes with money, greater glory only comes with success in this life, I've seen time and time again at funerals where this life was greatly lived *for this life*. Very little was lived for the life to come. Jesus tells us time and time again "Store not treasures for this life, but store up treasures in Heaven."

Oh, but Father, it is so much easier to store up treasures here. I agree. It is so much easier to have treasure here on earth. To have the nice car, to have a nice house. To have money in the bank. But many times that's where our focus is. We're so focused on what's here and now that we don't see what's around us.

It's interesting in the aftermath of all that happened at Notre Dame, all the hate that's come out of it. "Why would anyone put millions of dollars towards a church when there are people out there who are hungry? People are out there hungry every day. Does that mean you put money towards them every day? Well, no I'd much rather critique someone else's decision to give money. Ok. You're missing the point.

If there is a good thing to be done, do it. You don't have to have a reason to do it. If you have to have a reason to do it, it's right there (*referring to the crucifix*). Because He loves you. And He loves you despite your sins. He loves you in spite of your sins. Nothing that you can ever do can ever decrease His love for you! So will you accept His love? Or will you "except" His love? Except when it's inconvenient. Many times that's how we act in our lives.

My brothers in sisters, convenience does not mark love. Love marks inconvenience. Because it is inconvenient many times in this life for us to love. It's inconvenient for us to give of ourselves when we have very little ourselves.

I was reminded this last week of the widow's mite. Those two coins being everything she had to give, but she gave it. Versus the millionaire, billionaire (they never really said how much he had) who takes a thousand gold coins and puts them in. Ah, look at me! I did good today!

We can all do good today. God's calling us to be love today, in whatever manner that is. So if it's more loving to give more to the offering, I'm not going to stop you from doing it. But that's not what I'm calling us to. I'm calling us to be faithful witnesses in every moment of every day of our lives. In every aspect, in every inconvenient place. To allow the love of God to not just reside inside, but to be seen and shown without even mentioning His name.

We know people in our lives who are good with God and we've never heard them talk about God. We can just see in their faces see in their actions, see in their witness. That my brothers and sisters is who we're called to be. To be witnesses of God's love. Not just talkers about it. But to be doers. To put our money where our mouth is.

We can talk about these things, but what are we doing about these things? Now I realize while I'm saying that, I'm talking about living out God's love. Do I do it perfectly? No. That's how I know God's not ready for me yet. As much as I want Him to take me now – it's not going to happen because my heart is not ready.

My question though is, are we working on it? Are we allowing the love of God to penetrate our hearts, or are we kind of putting Him at that border patrol? Saying OK, God You can come in, but only 5% of my life, only 10% of my life... He wants 100%, my brothers and sisters.

So may we allow the love of God to pervade, to allow His love into every aspect of our lives. So that when we come to this celebration, it IS A CELEBRATION! We aren't gloomy, especially in this season of Easter!

It's so heart wrenching to look out at Mass sometimes and to see so many blank faces throughout Mass. Many times we become distracted and are thinking about something else. But He is our Lord and Savior, He has given us everything that we have, and He allows us to have joy in our hearts. Like that old song we learned as kids, "I've got that joy, joy, joy. joy down in my heart" Well, many of us have it really buried way down there! Because I really struggle to see it sometimes.

If that's so, my invitation to you today is take that joy out of the down, down, down, down in your heart, and bring it to the out, out, out, outside

of those walls to allow that joy to be seen! First it must be embraced, before it can be shared.