

7 Easter Friday SML 2020 JN 21:15-19

Of all the disciples of Our Blessed Lord, St. Peter is in the limelight more than any other. Of Peter, the most is known. Peter is mentioned 195 times in scripture; the rest of the Apostles combined, only 130 times. The one mentioned next in frequency to Peter is John, of whom there are 29 references.

St. Peter had by nature, great qualities of leadership:

- ✓ After the Resurrection, when he said, "I'm going fishing," the other Apostles naturally followed suit.
- ✓ Peter was a man of courage, expressed vehemently when he cut off the ear of Malchus at Jesus' arrest in Gethsemane.
- ✓ Peter was deeply attached to Our Blessed Lord. In John, Chapter 6, when the other disciples left Jesus after He told them they must eat His flesh and drink His blood, Peter maintained there was no one else to whom they could go.

Now Our Blessed Lord was deeply attached to Peter as well. Throughout salvation history, whenever anyone entered into a special covenant relationship with Our Blessed Lord, their name was changed:

1. from Abram to Abraham.

2. Abraham's wife from Sarai to Sarah.
3. from Jacob to Israel.
4. from Saul to Paul.
5. But of the twelve apostles, the only one whose name was changed was Peter. "You are Simon, son of John; you will be called Kephas" (which is translated Peter).

Granted a name change brightened the limelight for any disciple of Jesus Christ, whether it be Paul or Peter, but something that was unique only to Peter is this. Verbally, Jesus constantly linked himself to his Heavenly Father:

1. "The Father and I are one."
2. "He who has seen me has seen the Father."
3. "If you knew me, you would know my Father as well."
4. "The world must know that I love the Father and that I do just as the Father has commanded me."

But the only human being Our Blessed Lord ever united to Himself verbally, and spoke of Himself and that one as "we," was Peter. At Gethsemane, after the Agony in the Garden, as Judas and the leaders were coming to arrest him, Our Blessed

Lord said to Peter, "Still sleeping, Simon? Get up. **We** must be going. My betrayer is here."

Peter:

- ✓ great leader,
- ✓ courageous,
- ✓ deeply in love with Our Blessed Lord,
- ✓ his name was changed,
- ✓ the only one in the gospel that Jesus refers to himself and another as "we"
- ✓ the first to enter the tomb after the Resurrection

Can't get much closer to Jesus than that . . . yet it happens that limelight disciples get overcome by darkness.

Peter swore that though others would betray Our Blessed Lord, He would not. "Peter, before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times." Mark said that after Jesus predicted the exact time of the denial, Peter became vehement with Jesus. "If I must die with you, I will not deny you." When Peter was in the courtyard and the maid came up and said, "You knew him," he denied it. And the maid saw him again and said, "He's one of them," and he denied it again. And then a few others chimed in, and Peter got just as vehement with the bystanders as he did

with Jesus. "I do not know this man of whom you speak." Peter couldn't even bare to say his name. He did not say "I do not know Jesus," he said, "I do not know the man." And you know something, Peter never spoke truer words. Our Blessed Lord held Peter so close, called him "we," changed his name, and still, the limelight disciple was overcome by darkness. Earlier, when I told you Our Blessed Lord referred to himself and Peter as "we," did you catch the name Jesus used? "**Simon**, are you still sleeping?" **Simon**. Jesus used the name Peter had before he knew him. If I were Peter in the Garden, the first thing to hit me would have been, "He just called me Simon."

Peter had a deep sense of sin, and he begged Our Blessed Lord to depart from him because of his unworthiness. Yet Jesus would not hear of it. "Peter, do not be afraid. Don't let your sin stop you."

The sin that I'm thinking of right now . . . the sin we are all thinking of right now, is the sin that started this pandemic; the sin of risking the protocols of laboratory safety to be at the head of their research game when it comes to virology, and then the sin of coverup. These are big time sins. And unfortunately, those who commit these sins are so steeped in Communism, they

have not concept of forgiveness. Their concept is China and the Communist Party are the highest goods, and cross them and you're dead.

In Communism, there is no room for the idea of God; there is no difference between matter and spirit, between soul and body. There is neither survival of the soul after death nor any hope in a future life . . . one has no conscience.

How starkly dark their way of life must be. Because the sins that started this pandemic are forgivable. There is no sin we can commit that God can't forgive.

It happens that limelight disciples get overcome by darkness. You know something, if Peter stayed away because of his denying our Lord, there would be no Catholic Church. True Our Blessed Lord founded the Catholic Church, but he built it on Peter. If we stay away because of the darkness, because of the one particular concrete sin, there would be no Catholic Church tonight (today) because not one person in this parking lot is exempt.

It happens that limelight disciples get overcome by darkness. But limelight disciples are quick to return to Our Blessed Lord. Peter's story does not end at the fire in the courtyard. The story continues in this morning's gospel, with

Peter, by another fire, on the beach, with Our Blessed Lord.

"Peter (not Simon, but Peter), do you love me?" "Yes Lord, you know that I love you."