

May 5, 2019
Third Sunday of May

This is the Third Sunday Easter, one of the 50 days in preparation for Pentecost. On this Third Sunday of Easter, we read about the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples.

Notice where the disciples are when Jesus appears to them: they are on a boat. This is an important symbol because the part of a church where the people sit is called the *nave*. Think of the word “navy.” People who serve our country in the Navy are usually assigned to a boat.

We are all together on a boat – a boat with Simon Peter, our first pope, and with Jesus. The boat is going in a direction, toward the shore. If we think of the area of the church where the ambo and altar are located, the part we call the sanctuary, as the “shore,” and we remember that the sanctuary represents heaven, then this boat that we are on is leading us to heaven. In fact, the altar is the table of both heaven and earth.

Notice that the disciples are fishing. The Lord is preparing them, without them even knowing it, for being fishers of men and women instead of fish. And notice that they are fishing at night. Whenever something takes place at night, especially in the Gospel of John, it means more than just the hour of the day. It means confusion, chaos, not being able to see.

And then Jesus comes to them at dawn – yet another symbol of Jesus as *the light of all nations*. That is why we light the Paschal candle during Mass in the Easter season, to remind us that Jesus is the light of all nations.

Another symbol in this story is Peter jumping into the sea when he hears that it is the Lord – it represents baptism. When we are baptized, we jump in all the way. We could also say that Jesus jumps into us!

Jesus, as the light of all nations, always instructs us – to show us the way through the darkness into his own marvelous light. Notice how gently Jesus teaches the disciples, after they have spent a long night trying to catch fish with no luck. He instructs them to throw the nets over the right side of the boat. They do and they catch large fish – 153 of them! St. Jerome says that the number 153 has symbolic meaning. At that time, there were 153 known species of fish. So this multitude of fish represents all the different languages and cultures to whom the apostles would preach!

And after Jesus instructs the disciples, he feeds them. Throughout the Gospels, Jesus shared table with all kinds of people and for many different occasions. Jesus feeds *us*. He gives us the strength that we need in our weakness.

Allow Jesus to teach you, and feed you, during this Easter Season.

As we move closer to Pentecost, may we together continue to grow in what Pope Francis call us to do – and that is, to be the Church that “goes out.”