

## Third Sunday of Easter – May 4, 2025, Year C

### Homily:

Last Sunday, we heard how Jesus came to Thomas to heal his doubts about Jesus' resurrection. Jesus invited Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands, and bring your hand and put it into my side, and do not be unbelieving, but believe." Thomas responded, "My Lord and my God." (John 20:27-28) In today's Gospel, once again, Jesus comes to restore and heal; this time, he restores Peter. In the high priest's house, while Jesus was being questioned, Peter denied him three times by a charcoal fire (John 18:12-26), and a cock crowed. In today's Gospel, three times by a charcoal fire, Jesus asks Peter if he loves him and gives him his mission (John 21:1-19).

Jesus appeared to the apostles multiple times after his resurrection. Luke, along with Paul in his First Letter to the Corinthians, tells us that before appearing to the apostles together, Jesus first appeared to Peter alone (Luke 24:34; 1 Cor 15:5). We do not know much about this; we only have a brief statement in Luke indicating it occurred on Easter Sunday and a straightforward declaration in Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians. We can imagine that Jesus brought significant healing to Peter during that private apparition. This was surely the beginning of undoing, healing, and

forgiveness for Peter's three denials of Jesus by the charcoal fire in the high priest's house.

In today's Gospel, in the presence of the apostles by the Sea of Galilee, Jesus asked Peter three times by a charcoal fire if he loved him. This marked the deepening of the undoing, healing, and forgiveness of Peter's three denials of Jesus. The three denials have now been erased and replaced with Peter's three promises of love.

Peter had to forgive himself. We can guess that Peter struggled significantly with forgiving himself. After the cock crowed and Peter realized what he had done, he wept. This was his remorse. For some, forgiving themselves is a challenge. It is important to remember that when we repent, God can turn evil into good. Paul wrote in Romans 8:28, "We know that all things work for good for those who love God," which means that even a failure or sin of some kind can be transformed into good for those who love God. Paul would know. Before his conversion, he stood by as the first martyr, Stephen, was being stoned to death (Acts 7:58-8:1; 22:20). Before his conversion, we might describe Paul as a terrorist, but after his conversion, he worked tirelessly for Christ's Church.

Another example of evil turned to good is found in the life of the patriarch Joseph in the Old Testament, who was sold by his brothers to passing traders heading to

Egypt. Joseph helped Egypt prepare for a famine, and when his brothers came to Egypt for food to take back home, he said to them, “Even though you meant harm to me, God meant it for good, to achieve this present end, the survival of many people.” (Gen 50:20; see also 45:7-8) Evil was turned to good. Those struggling to forgive themselves need to reflect deeply on Jesus’ forgiveness. Jesus’ forgiveness is like a bottomless well; there is no end to it. That surely is one way of understanding Divine Mercy last Sunday. When Jesus has forgiven you in Confession, why would you persist in condemning yourself? Let evil be turned to good. Allow all things to work for good because of your love of God.

We can imagine that Peter became a much stronger person after failing Jesus, repenting, and being restored by Him. We see that strength in Peter in our first reading from the Acts of the Apostles when Peter and the other apostles were forbidden by the Sanhedrin to preach about Jesus, but they responded, “We must obey God rather than men.” (Acts 5:29) What a complete change in Peter: going from denying Jesus to saying, “We must obey God rather than men.” In today’s Gospel, Jesus says to Peter:

When you were younger, you dressed yourself and went where you wanted. But as you grow older, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not wish to go.

John explains that these words of Jesus pertain to Peter's future martyrdom for preaching about Him. In Rome, Peter would eventually be crucified during the persecutions of Christians by Emperor Nero. We again witness the transformation in Peter, from denying Jesus to giving his life for Him. As you gaze at St. Peter's Basilica, to the left is an arch where two Swiss Guards are stationed, and behind that arch is where Peter was crucified upside down because he remained faithful to Jesus. He transitioned from denying Jesus to giving his life for Him because he obeyed God rather than men. Three times, Jesus asked Peter if he loved Him, and three times, he confirmed that he did. He demonstrated this love for Jesus throughout his life, even to the extent of being crucified for Him in Rome. He turned evil into good and allowed all things to work together for good because of his love for God.

Jesus came to Thomas to heal his doubts about His resurrection. Jesus restored Peter after his three denials. Those struggling to forgive themselves need to reflect deeply on Jesus' forgiveness, which is like a bottomless well—there is no end to it. Jesus asked Peter three times if he loved him as he restored him. I believe we could

hear Jesus asking each of us three times if we love him. Since Jesus has forgiven you in Confession, why would you continue to condemn yourself? Let evil be turned to good and allow all things to work for good because of your love for God, so that you may be free from condemnation and enjoy the peace of Jesus.

The Risen Lord asks us today: Do you love me? Because at Easter, Jesus desires our hearts to rise too; faith is not merely a question of knowledge but of love. Do you love me? Jesus asks you and me, who have empty nets and are afraid to start out again, who lack the courage to dive in and perhaps have lost our momentum. Do you love me? Jesus asks. From that moment on, Peter stopped fishing forever and dedicated himself to the service of God and his brothers and sisters, even to the point of giving his life. And what about us? Do we wish to love Jesus?

May Our Lady, who readily said “yes” to the Lord, help us to rediscover the impulse to do good.