

HOM 3rd Sunday Easter 2019 C May 5

When I was 10 or 11 years old, my Dad and I went fishing early on a cold Saturday morning in late April or early May. Using spinning reels with lures, we worked our way down one side of the small lake toward the spillway of the dam, making many casts, but catching nothing. By 11 am we were getting ready to call it quits in another 15 minutes.

Three rowdy teenage boys from the nearby village of Star Junction, suddenly arrived on the scene at that point and tried to make a fire for themselves, but the cold breeze kept blowing out their matches and kindling.

“*Hey, Mister*”, one of them said to my Dad, “*Got any matches?*”

My Dad reached into his fishing vest and flipped open a matchbook. “*I have one left,*” he said. “*Let me help you guys.*”

I thought to myself, “*Why don’t you just tell them to get lost?*” And I kept fishing.

So Dad got a fire going for them. And when he resumed fishing, he caught three nice trout...amazingly...with his next three casts. And even though I was fishing right next to him at the time, I continued to catch nothing.

On the way home, I marveled at what had taken place – at how my Dad, who was a heavy smoker, gave up the last match he had on him to help some disruptive young teens with a fire, and was rewarded with a miraculous catch of fish, and how I, whose thoughts toward those young intruders were not kind, caught nothing. And I understood that the Lord was teaching me a lesson about kindness toward others (my Dad’s) versus disdainfulness toward them (mine).

In today’s Gospel reading, the Risen Jesus is also teaching a lesson to His disciples, namely to Simon Peter and his fishing partners. Jesus is first of all reminding them of the time several years before His Death and Resurrection when He told Simon Peter – after Simon had been fishing all night without a catch -- to put out into deep water and to lower his nets. When he did so, the catch of fish was nearly overwhelming, and Our Lord told him: “*Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men.*” (Luke 5: 1-11)

By repeating this event after His Resurrection, Jesus is not only reminding Peter and the others that they were called to be fishers of men, He is also, in effect, teaching them that by following His instructions and example, they will succeed at this.

Jesus then turns to Peter, as the chosen leader of His Church, and asks him three times, “*Do you love me?*” This was one time for each denial of Jesus by Peter. Also, the first two times Jesus asked the question, He used the Greek verb “*agape*” for love, which means a self-sacrificing love unto the Cross. When Peter answers, however, he uses the Greek verb “*philia*” which

means a brotherly love. It suggests that Peter was not yet ready to love and follow Jesus unto the Cross.

With the third question, Jesus uses the verb with which Peter answered, indicating His acceptance of Peter's lesser love. But then He tells Peter that when He is older – meaning after Pentecost when Peter and the others have received the Holy Spirit in full measure – he will love Jesus unto the Cross as Jesus has loved him: “*You will stretch out your hands...and someone...will lead you where you do not want to go.*” Jesus says. The Gospel writer John then notes that this signified by what kind of death Peter would glorify God, namely martyrdom, upside down on a Cross.

Indeed, it is this obedience to the new commandment of love Jesus gave us – i.e., to love one another as I have loved you -- that catches people for Christ and grows the Church and builds up God's Kingdom to full stature. The apostles got the message. That's why in our first reading we read that Peter and the apostles kept proclaiming the Gospel despite arrest, imprisonment, and warnings of further punishment if they continued. Indeed, all of them laid down their lives to lead others to Christ, and all but one was martyred. They even rejoiced that they had been found worthy of suffering for Jesus.

Brothers and sisters, if we do not love Jesus enough to suffer for Him and for all those He came to gather to Himself, then we do not love Jesus enough. Nor do we love others enough. But, like Peter, we can learn to do so.

We can learn to offer ourselves to and with Jesus in Holy Communion to the Father's will unto the Cross for the true good, most especially the eternal good, the salvation, of every person, and joyfully live this out.

And if we do, then one day we will be among those in our second reading around the throne of Jesus in Heaven, praising and thanking Him for offering us oneness with Himself, and for conferring on us a share in His divine glory forever, in the new heavens and the new earth.

Our Blessed Mother Mary will help us learn to love Jesus and others as she did – more than enough -- so that all the willing get to Heaven. At Holy Communion, just pray these words silently and sincerely: I AM ALL YOURS O MOST LOVING JESUS THROUGH MARY YOUR MOTHER.