

### 3<sup>RD</sup> SUNDAY OF EASTER, Cycle C

*Acts 5: 27-32; 40b-41 + Psalm 30 + Revelation 5: 11-14 + John 21: 1-19*

Holy Spirit Catholic Church: April 10, 2016

Breakfast on the beach! Who says God doesn't have a sense of humor?  
The Risen Jesus, destroyer of death, king of the universe,  
serves up breakfast like a short-order cook.  
The Risen Lord in all his glory appears to his followers in a most ordinary way,  
not with a booming voice proclaiming, "*I'm alive!!*"  
but with three simple words: "*Come, have breakfast.*"

Every morning of my growing-up life I heard those words ring out  
from my mother's lips: "*Come, have breakfast.*"  
These words we hear from parents, spouses, friends, but from the Risen Jesus??

Jesus, risen from the dead, returns for his friends and performs  
a very basic act of human love---he feeds them.  
Hard at work all night long, they are famished, so he feeds their hunger.  
He nourishes them by his love.  
Near the same body of water where he had taken a few loaves and a few fish  
and fed a multitude, he now bakes breakfast for his hungry friends.

By doing so, the Risen Jesus reveals God's hunger for them, God's desire for them,  
longing for them and for their love.  
For in his Resurrection, Jesus does something much, *much more than come back  
from the dead---he comes into the fullness of life*—a life he longs to share with others.  
A life he wants his followers to share with a world hungering for such abundant life.  
Sharing in his Risen life, they then can share Him with the world.  
Receiving his love, which is stronger than death, they can love as they are loved,  
and thus lead others into life with Him.

We see this divine hunger at work in the encounter between the Risen Jesus and  
Simon Peter over a charcoal fire, a fire similar to the one where Peter  
had warmed himself while 3 times denying that he even knew Jesus.  
Jesus hungers to give Peter an opportunity to move beyond the shame of his denials,  
by giving Peter a chance to express his love for Jesus.  
It is a powerful scene as Jesus challenges the one he has chosen to be the leader of the  
early Church to declare his love three times for Jesus,  
matching the number of his denials.

What we miss in the English text is *how* Jesus is calling Peter to love. In the original Greek text, Jesus asks Peter the first 2 times “*Do you love me?*” using the verb *agapao*, denoting the self-sacrificial love of God for humanity as shown by Jesus’ love on the cross.

Agape-love is the kind of love Christians are to show God and neighbor and enemy--- it is a godly kind of love.

Jesus longs for Peter to love in such a way.

But Peter is not there yet, because Peter responds using the verb *phileo*, which describes the love shared between friends.

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> occasion, Jesus changes the verb, asking Peter, “*Do you love me?*” using *phileo*. Peter responds using *phileo* once again.

Jesus accepts the love which Peter offers at this time.

*It’s what godly love does*, because it is self-sacrificing, patient and generous beyond belief---this kind of love takes people where they are and leads them slowly but surely to where they need to be.

Jesus alludes to the fact that Peter will eventually be able to love in this way, stating that when Peter is older he will stretch out his hands and be led where he does not want to go, referring to Peter’s own death on a cross.

The love of the Risen Jesus for Peter is a powerful force—such a love transforms Peter’s life.

Throughout his relationship with Peter, both before and after the Resurrection, Jesus loves Peter into a new way of life, a new way of being.

He is patient with Peter, ever able to forgive Peter for his failings, always calling Peter to a more abundant life and a more generous way of loving.

***For Jesus what is at stake is not belief, it is love.***

What the Risen Jesus sees more clearly than anything is that Peter loves him, even if that love at the present moment is not the same love that Jesus has for Peter.

Peter actually starts loving in an “agape” way even before dying on a cross by courageously proclaiming to the same characters who condemned Jesus to death—the Sanhedrin--that he will not obey their command to stop teaching about Jesus. Such courage will lead Peter to give his life completely in agape love for the Lord.

Proof of the resurrection shines forth in those who love others as the Risen Lord loves Peter—with an agape-like love.

Glimpses of this resurrection love shine forth around us, for those who have eyes to see, as the Risen Lord shows His face in the most ordinary of ways by those who love extraordinarily.

Many parents love their children in such a way, taking their children where they are and loving them to where they need to be.

Such parents feed their children, even when their children are not loving or kind or even grateful.

Such parents take children where they are and love them to where they need to go.

This is not always a perfect process--it has its ups and downs.

However, the self-sacrificial love of parents for their kids is transformative.

For it transforms not only a child who grows up being nourished by such a love, but it *also transforms the parent*.

This is the way husband and wife are called to love each other.

To love one's husband as he is; to love one's spouse as she is.

In the daily act of self-giving love, of self-sacrificing love, the recipient of such love grows and changes.

This is what God's love does through people---takes others where they are and leads them slowly and patiently to where they need to be.

Such Agape-loving nourishes others in a powerful way by leading them into new life.

Perhaps where we catch the most powerful glimpse of the Risen Lord alive and working is through those who love their enemies.

Talk about "agape" love, taking people where they are and loving them without expecting anything in return.

In order to love in such a way we need to be fed and nourished by such a love.

Which is why the Risen Jesus invites us to breakfast with Him this morning, which is why He invites us to come and eat at this table over and over again.

As we experience in an ordinary yet powerful way the love of the Lord for us through sharing in this meal with one another, we are transformed.

Our eyes open and we see clearly how the Risen Jesus has loved us in our life through the self-giving, self-sacrificing love of others.

We cannot hold back from singing His praise, from thanking Him, from crying out with everything in the universe:

*"Blessing and glory, honor and might, be to God and the Lamb."*

Here, we are once again given an opportunity to express our love for the Lord Jesus, and to be strengthened to love with Him and through Him and in Him.....

*Fr. Joseph A. Jacobi*