

It can be argued that the season of Lent is a season not only of self denial, but also a time of self discovery, especially as we see the greatness of God compared to our sinful fallen nature. It is a valuable and beautiful season, that helps us to see Gods great love for us in His suffering and death on the cross, and his great gift of the Eucharist. The Lenten readings certainly bear this out.

But now we are in the great and joyous time of Easter. The flavor of the readings changes from God and I to God and us. In the Resurrection events of the Gospel, the appearance of Jesus to His followers serve to teach and strengthen us as much today as when the Church was new.

The readings from Revelation show us, in as much as we are able to comprehend, the Glory of God and the beauty of our future and forever Heavenly home.

In the readings of the Acts of the Apostles, we see the early life of the Church, not so much as a lesson in history but rather as an example of what the Church, that is all of us the clergy and the laity alike, should look like as we strive to build up the kingdom of God in this our Earthly city.

In today's first reading we see the first work of the Church. The Church is to spread the Gospel, the Good news of the love of God throughout the world. It tells us that we may experience trials and persecution in speaking with the Prophetic voice of God, but even those things will never diminish this sacred duty of evangelization. The critical importance of this evangelization is fortified by today's Gospel. While it is all of the Apostles that were told from the beginning of their time with Jesus that they would be fisher's of men, it is Peter, our first Pope that brings the entire bounty of fish to the

Lord, even though Jesus only asked for some of them. It is a symbol of our commitment to spreading God's word and bringing all of humanity to Him.

In last week's Gospel, we saw the institution of a Sacrament of God's great mercy, the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Whose sins are forgiven by the Church in the name of Jesus, are without a doubt forgiven. And in this morning's Gospel, we see a shadow, a reminder of the Holy Eucharist in the sharing of bread, the very Sacrament we have celebrated, unceasingly for over 2000 years, and we are soon to celebrate again today. The Second Sacred duty of the Church is to dispense the Sacraments, those great gifts of God that demonstrate in an effectual, efficient and powerful way, the unconditional Love of God for His children.

And so what is the third Sacred duty of the Church?

It is to love and to act in love. This is no small task. To love Jesus enough to always respond to everything and everyone in this love is something that has to become as natural to us as our own skin. It must permeate everything we say and do and think. It must become the Voice of Christ to the very depths of our own consciences. It must saturate our homes, our workplaces, everything and everyone we meet, and must extend even to those whom we may never have the chance to meet, this side of Heaven.

Peter, do you love me? When Jesus addresses Peter, He addresses the Church. When Jesus addresses the Church, He addresses us, both corporately and as individuals.

Peter do you love me? Yes, lord I love you. Then respond in love. Feed my lambs, those who cannot feed themselves. Those who are so marginalized that they have no choice but to be dependant on others for their well being. The unborn, the homeless, the battered and abused. The addict, the immigrant, the displaced, the exile. Speak for them. Defend them. Live for them, so that they may live in hope of the same Kingdom of God that we seek.

So now let me ask you again:

Peter do you love me? Yes, lord I love you. Then respond in love. Tend my sheep. Step outside your comfort zone. See to the basic needs of all humanity. Work for freedom of faith and thought, shelter, and honest employment for all with a just living wage wage. See that the poor, the sick, the aged, the young, have an education, fight for the just treatment for all in both charity as well as law, and an opportunity to live in the dignity that we all share, an opportunity to become what God intended for them to be. Hatred, racism, sexism, these have no place in the Kingdom, and so tend my sheep without judgment or preference. There cannot be room in our thoughts and actions for opinion polls, or the sway of a society that is not yet conformed to the mind of Christ.

Now that you know the extent of the love I ask of you, let me ask again:

Peter do you love me? Yes, lord I love you. Then respond in love. Feed my sheep. Do not fail to feed the man dying of hunger, or you will surely have killed him. Thou shall not kill. Provide for the aged, clothe the naked. Make proper use of the resources we have been given. Mourn with those who

mourn, cry with those who cry and pray for those who no one to pray for them.

Never forget those that are under the thumb of oppressive work, tyranny and the threat to their very lives because they lack the basic freedoms that mankind, created in the image of God deserve.

Impart to our society what gifts you have been endowed with. Hone these gifts and skills so that they may be of maximum value to the betterment of mankind. Your work and your vocation are opportunities for holiness, occasions for love of neighbor.

Use them to help bring about the Kingdom of God, where all of His sheep are called to dwell.

Allow Christ to renew our minds, hearts and souls. Let us properly form our consciences to be harmony with the will of God.

This is no easy task. It is, in fact, incomprehensible for us to love to the depth which Christ calls us to if left on our own.

However, Christ has generously endowed us with all we need, all the resources to allow us to achieve so great a mission.

We enjoy the full revelation of God, in the teaching Magisterium of the Church, and in her holy Traditions as well as Sacred Scripture. The Church makes these readily available to each of us.

The great treasury of our Church, the Sacraments along with this full revelation strengthens, encourages and fortifies us for the essential commission of loving Jesus so that we might love others.

Let us not forget that we have each other. We don't have to do this all by ourselves. We have a stake in one another's sanctification, a share in each other's salvation, a pledge to aid one another in faith, spoken by others at our Baptism and affirmed by the Church.

This same Church has in place many programs, agencies and opportunities for reaching out to others. Organized groups of men and women dedicated to bringing the love of Christ to those who so desperately need it.

And so I will pose the question one more time:

Peter, do you love me?