

Homily Easter 3 Sunday 18th April, 2010.

Mass Readings: Acts 5:27-32, 40-41; Apocalypse 5:11-14; John 21:1-19.

What is most important for us, I think, to connect with is the devastation felt by the disciples in those first terrible few days after the death of Jesus. He didn't die by accident. He was executed, publicly, horribly, slowly. He died alone – because they ran off. They didn't want to know Him.

*“Aren't you another of His disciples?”
“No, I am not.”*

“No, I am not, no I am not, no I am not.” Three times – “No not me – I don't know Him.” How those words must have rung in Peter's head, since that awful Friday, like some slow sad tolling of a bell. “How could I have said that? How could we all have run off?” But they did. Last week we heard how they gathered together behind locked doors. The outside doors are locked and the inside doors of heart and mind are locked too. They're locked in basically, locked up with those haunting questions: “How could we? Why didn't we? What if? What now? What now? If only.....?” They try to capture some of their old life, go back to what they know, to what's safe and understandable – to fishing. They go back to the past basically. The past is all they have, they're locked up in it. There is no future now. What future? The future we had is dead – decapitated. The elite has gone. We hoped for so much, but.....The dead don't come back. It's over, it's over. Life must go on, somehow. They fish.

When you're grieving so badly, and the pain is so real, the future loses its face, the horror of the present and the past is all you know. They go over it all again and again..... The disciples don't know where to go now, except backwards. Some women say that they have some news of Him but they can't break through, no one wants to listen. How can they listen? How could they meet Him? How can you look into the eyes of your victim? How do you look into the face of the One you deserted, betrayed, who had promised you so much? How could they bear to hear what He might want to say to them?

“Have you caught anything friends?”

This shout coming from some guy on the beach brings them back to the present.

“No, nothing.”

The empty nets reflect their hearts and minds – their present, their future, empty.

“Try again, to the right, the fish are jumping!”

They do so, and their nets fill up. Their memories fill up. It happened before, remember? Deep water, out all night, caught nothing, daybreak, new possibility, nets on the other side, so many fish.

“It's Him! It's Him!”

What excites me about these first encounters between Jesus and His disciples, after the resurrection, is that He never refers to the past. He never speaks of it. His first words called out to them from the beach are about their welfare: “You guys ok? Have you caught anything? Try something else, on the other side of the boat. Then, come and have breakfast.”

He is Now, and because He is here now everything can change and be re-born. “I am the resurrection and the Life.”

He speaks about another possibility for them, about looking somewhere else for fish, and about the future, their future – somewhere they can't imagine exists until He speaks about it. In the upper room He comes through locked doors and speaks of the future. “As the Father sent me, so I send you.” What's most important here is that He doesn't go back, to what was, what should have been. There is no blaming, no hard questions about their cowardice. Only – “You guys ok? C'mon, let's go!” Nothing of the past. Just one question in the present, and the rest flows from this: “Do you love me?” Not, why didn't you love me last Thursday night and early last Friday morning? “Do you love me now, here, as you are, this moment?”

That's always His question to you and I. “Do you love me now?” Whenever you come to Mass, to confession, to adoration, to Him in the quiet privacy of your heart, He has one question for you: “You ok?” Then: “Peace be with you, come on, don't be afraid, I need you, to send you, to use you – do you trust me, do you love me?” If we can say ‘yes’ from the heart to that question then everything is possible. As He said: “Everything is possible to anyone who has faith.”

It's a question to you, and in a way, therefore, also to Poland. “Do you love me more than these – these pains, these memories, these betrayals, these losses. Do you believe what I can do now?” If you answer ‘yes’ then you are already Poland's elite. The elite in a nation are not those who have some special talents and charismatic powers, but those who know how to love, firstly how to love God, and then others. They are the elite. It's the loving fathers, mothers, husbands, wives, children who are the elite of any nation. The elite are those who forgive, who show mercy and compassion, who hope, who have faith – basically those who follow Christ. Poland will never be lost while you answer Jesus with the words of Peter: “Yes, Lord, you know I love you.”

Take some moments today and this week and stay with Jesus' question: “Do you love me, as you are, now, with all that's been, with all that is, with all that can be?” Say ‘yes’, for yourself, for those dear to you, for your great and beloved country. It's through you and I saying ‘yes’ to this that others will be fed and looked after. To say ‘yes’ is to follow, and to follow is to take others with you. May God bless you today and always.