

We do not often get a second chance when we make a mistake in life. In today's Gospel reading, the Lord gave the apostles exactly that, the gift of a second chance!

Their going fishing makes it seem that their belief in the Resurrection hadn't yet taken hold on their lives. They were going back to the business they knew as if nothing had really changed in their lives. They needed revival as witnesses to the life, death and Resurrection of Jesus. That is what Jesus gives them here.

Maybe Easter Sunday was a time of renewal in Christ, our faith was strengthened and, now, here we are in the third week of Easter and are starting to run out of steam. Let's focus on three moments in this Gospel: the meal, the mission, and the martyrdom because each of these moments speaks to us.

First, there is the meal. We don't know what they discussed with Jesus at that meal on the seashore. It must have reminded them of many meals they shared with Him in His earthly life, the meal on the mountainside after the multiplication of loaves, the meal at the house of Matthew with all those tax collectors, the Passover meals and, of course, that Last Supper when Jesus gave them a way He would remain with them and then prayed for them. Now, here they were, after the Resurrection, and all that came back to them. Here was a second chance to renew their union with Christ!

At Mass, we renew our union with Christ. It reminds us of other Masses in our life: our first Holy Communion, Confirmation, Wedding, other Easter and Christmas Masses, funerals and special Masses. Here, the Lord speaks to us again, teaches us again, joins us to each other again around the altar as He gives us His own Self again. We need the constant renewal that the Eucharist offers. We need Mass every Sunday to renew our identity as disciples, to be close to Christ and to remember who we are because so much in our life pulls us away from Christ.

Each Mass is always a second chance to remember and revive our identity as disciples. That's what Jesus did for the apostles at the seashore. And that is what He does for us at every Mass.

Secondly, there is the mission. Jesus takes Peter aside and asks the threefold question, "Do you love me?" to reverse Peter's threefold denial. A wonderful forgiveness is happening here. This is something Peter could not do for himself. Notice that each time Jesus asks, "Do you love me?" and Peter answers, "I do," the Lord responds by saying, "Feed my sheep." Peter would show that love not by more words of love but by deeds of love by feeding the sheep and caring for Christ's flock.

For Peter, love for Christ would mean caring for the whole flock. And Peter will do exactly that for the rest of his life. We are called to care for a portion of that flock, a parish, a family, children, a spouse, an aging parent, people at work, those for whom the Lord is calling us to care now. Like Peter, we show our love for the Lord not by what we say but by caring for others, feeding their minds, souls and bodies. Jesus is saying to Peter and to us, "Show me." That's the mission Jesus gave Peter on the seashore. That's what the Lord gives us at each Mass in our own way. Each Mass is a second chance for us to renew our dedication to the benefit and good of the Church.

Finally, there is the martyrdom. Jesus speaks to Peter about his death, "When you get older, another will lead you against your will." Although martyrdom is a heroic witness, there are many other ways of giving witness. In our time, we are called to speak to the value of human rights and the sacredness of life, to strengthen the family and to stand for human dignity especially in the area of sexuality, and for civility and respect for others

especially in a polarized society like ours. Our generation has its own call and someday, we pray, we will have our own success story to tell.

Each one of us is called to give witness maybe not at the risk of our life but at the risk of our popularity, friendships, position, leisure time or career opportunities. We don't know what awaits us in the future, but here, at the Mass, we are given a second chance to receive grace for that witness. Jesus gave Peter the grace for witness. At each Mass, the Lord gives us a second chance to receive grace for witnessing to Him.

In this seashore appearance of Christ, we have the meal, the mission, the call to witness. At each Mass, we have the Eucharist, the sacrament and sacrifice of Christ where we have the second chance to renew ourselves as followers of Jesus, to renew our commitment to the good of the Church by feeding the sheep of Christ in our life, to receive the grace for our own personal witness to Christ.

The final truth about Peter and the apostles is not their abandonment of the Lord but the fact that they were given a second chance and used it magnificently for the Kingdom. Hopefully the final truth about us will not be found in our departures from the Lord but in how we have used our gifts of a second chance from Christ.