

### ***Third Sunday of Easter (C)***

***April 10, 2016.***

*Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you (Jn. 21:17).*

The Easter Season is a privileged time of catechesis or instruction both for the newly-baptized and for all of us who renewed our baptismal vows on Easter Sunday. This liturgical catechesis is called *mystagogy* because it draws into the Mystery of Christ. This mystery is a *reality that is the foundation of our hope and the reality that illuminates our entire earthly pilgrimage, including the enigma of suffering and death* (Pope Benedict XVI). This is the Mystery that we celebrate with great care and solemnity every year, the Paschal Mystery; and this Mystery is the source of our renewal and life in Christ. The knowledge of this Mystery has one purpose ultimately, as we live our lives – a love for Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ that engages all our heart, soul and mind. St. Paul declared that to be in Christ is to be a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17) and as we journey through life, this renewal is constantly at work in us so *that beholding the glory of the Lord, we are changed into his likeness, from one degree of glory to another* (2 Cor. 3:18). This is the transformative element of our faith that makes saints of sinners and that leads from darkness to light.

As we celebrate Our Lord's glorious Resurrection and contemplate its transformative power, the Sacred Liturgy today invites us to consider the figure of Peter, the Prince of the Apostles. St. John tells that *this was the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead*. He also tells us that *Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name* (Jn. 20:30, 31). Clearly, after His resurrection Our Lord ensured that the truth of His resurrection in the flesh was firmly established in the minds of His disciples. The power of the mystery of the Resurrection is such that its effect is truly life changing. This is evident in the dialogue between Our Lord and St. Peter. *Simon, son John, do you love me more than these... Simon, son of John, do you love me... Simon, son of John, do you love me? .... Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you... Feed my sheep*. St. Augustine observes: *He who denied and loved, died in perfect love for Him, for Whom he had promised to die with wrong haste. It was necessary that Christ should first die for Peter's salvation, and then Peter die for Christ's Gospel* (St. Augustine, *Tract. cxxiii, Catena Aurea, In Joannem*, p. 626).

Later, as he preached the Gospel of salvation in Rome, then the capital of the ancient world, the Resurrection would provide for St. Peter the courage that he had lacked when he denied Our Lord; when *he had promised to die with wrong haste*. Perhaps what St. Augustine describes as *wrong haste* we might describe as the folly or impetuosity of love, a love not yet deepened or seasoned by sacrifice. *It was necessary that Christ should die first for Peter's salvation*, St. Augustine observes. The grace obtained through Our Lord's Sacred Passion is what would later give St. Peter the courage to suffer martyrdom for the sake of Our Lord. *Feed my lambs... Feed my sheep*. This command, in many ways, is one that each one of us also receives, especially as we grow and mature in our faith and charity, and take our place as adult members of our communities of faith. *To feed the sheep is to support the believers in Christ from falling from the faith, to provide earthly sustenance for those under us, to preach and exemplify our preaching by our lives, to resist adversaries, to correct wanderers* (*Catena Aurea*, p. 624). These are the tasks of

every mature Catholic; every priest and teacher, every parent and adult, of everyone who knows and loves our Lord.

After the Resurrection, Our Lord said: *'These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you – that everything written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms must be fulfilled.'* Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.... *You are witnesses of these things* (Lk. 24: 44-48). We know that once the disciples came to the awareness of these truths, everything literally changed. They boldly proclaimed the truth of the Resurrection and this has continued through the ages. We, in our day, are now the *witnesses of these things*. The truth of the Resurrection is not true because we believe it to be true; it is true in itself. However, the power of its truth is only felt when we become aware of its implication in our own lives. Surely, each year that we celebrate the Paschal Mystery we do become more aware of this grace; and understand with greater depth of understanding the life conferred on us by our Lord's sacrifice; and we come understand that the *Passion of Christ completely suffices to fashion our lives*. In the Paschal Mystery, the words of Scripture are fulfilled; and this means that the Atoning Sacrifice of Our Lord 'according to the Scriptures' *is an event that bears within itself a 'logos', a logic* (Pope Benedict XVI, *Easter Wednesday Catechesis*, 2009). This is the only logic capable of explaining the entire history of man and of the world. On a more intimately personal level, the Paschal Mystery enables us to understand our own existence. To enter into this Mystery and to strive to understand the events of our own lives by its meaning and logic is what our Lord calls each one of us to do and what the Sacred Liturgy endeavours to do especially during this privileged time of instruction or *mystagogy*.

We approach these Feasts each year with a sense of expectation and hope in the awareness that God desires that we come to a deeper awareness of the life that is ours because of our Lord's saving Sacrifice. This is what active participation in the Sacred Liturgy implies: a deeper sense of the truths and events of salvation and their effect on our life. Our prayerful presence here on this the Lord's Day, the *dies Domini* that each week celebrates the Resurrection is our own encounter with the Risen Lord. And we make our own the words of St. Peter: *Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you*. And so everything we do here, from the externals in their every detail to our own dispositions as we celebrate these mysteries; everything, our posture as we listen to His word, our docility in being instructed, *formed by divine teaching*, as it were, our devotion as we receive Holy Communion – all of these speak of our deep, personal love for Our Saviour and this love is what enables us to do great things for God's greater glory and the salvation of souls. So we pattern our lives on the Mystery that we profess and that we celebrate with reverence and love; so *that beholding the glory of the Lord, we are changed into his likeness, from one degree of glory to another* (2 Cor. 3:18).