

## **May 1, 2022 – Third Sunday of Easter**

<sup>1</sup>After [he appeared to his followers in Jerusalem,] Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias; and he showed himself in this way. <sup>2</sup>Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples. <sup>3</sup>Simon Peter said to them, “I am going fishing.” They said to him, “We will go with you.” They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

<sup>4</sup>Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. <sup>5</sup>Jesus said to them, “Children, you have no fish, have you?” They answered him, “No.” <sup>6</sup>He said to them, “Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some.” So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish. <sup>7</sup>That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord!” When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on some clothes, for he was naked, and jumped into the sea. <sup>8</sup>But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, only about a hundred yards off.

<sup>9</sup>When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. <sup>10</sup>Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish that you have just caught.” <sup>11</sup>So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred fifty-three of them; and though there were so many, the net was not torn. <sup>12</sup>Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.” Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, “Who are you?” because they knew it was the Lord. <sup>13</sup>Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. <sup>14</sup>This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

<sup>15</sup>When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my lambs.” <sup>16</sup>A second time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Tend my sheep.” <sup>17</sup>He said to him the third time, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, “Do you love me?” And he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep. <sup>18</sup>Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go.” <sup>19</sup>(He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, “Follow me.”

**Some people love to get dressed up to come and  
worship to the Lord.**

**Now we see that somewhat here but it's not at all as  
common as it is back East or down South.**

**As for me, I basked in the last Sunday I spent as a layperson at All Saints Lutheran in Phoenix, wearing an aloha shirt, cargo shorts and flip flops to church because I knew I wouldn't get the opportunity again for at least another year or so, and even then only as a one-off every now and again while on vacation.**

**That said, in an unfamiliar context, I tend to err on the side of over-dressing. I had never been to a synod assembly until I went to the 2017 edition in Grand Canyon Synod and, well, I didn't pack for varying degrees of possibility, nor did I bother to inquire with my supervising pastor as I was an intern at the time. So I had three days' worth of suits and the bow ties I've grown fond of wearing with my formal wear. Turns out the standard attire for pastors at that event: aloha shirts and khakis ... my suits made for great conversations starters all throughout that extended weekend at least. Just as a bow tie often does when visiting patients as a hospital chaplain.**

I often get the question of “what should I wear” when friends or family come and pay a visit on Sunday to a church I’m serving for the first time. My response is usually something to the effect of wear what you feel comfortable in. If you want to dress up, dress up, but don’t feel like you have to, for anyone else’s sake.

I recognize that for some people, if they came to church without a suit on, they would feel uncomfortable themselves, even if no one else around them cared in the slightest.

I guess Peter was one of those people.

Otherwise, I can’t think of any reason why he would put clothes \*on\* to jump into the water.

Well, if we back up a minute, I’m not entirely sure why the man was fishing in the buff in the first place.

Scholars of antiquity say it might not have been so strange for the time and place. That seems to track with the kind of matter-of-factly presentation of the scene that John gives us. And for practical purposes, I’m thinking a garment

kind of like this alb that served for common daywear wouldn't be all that practical for night fishing out on a lake in a boat.

Some biblical commentaries go to great lengths to assure us that Peter must have been wearing some kind of undergarment and it was an outer garment that he put on to take the plunge. It sounds to me like there's a lot more modern Western sensibility in that interpretation than anything else. Public nudity is almost universally shameful in our culture.

But the Scripture gives us some contrasting scenes. When Bathsheba bathes in a public bath, it's not that she is being indecent and she isn't described as such. The sin of the situation begins with David's lingering gaze, wanting to have her and killing to do so. Meanwhile, the prophet Hosea describes publicly stripping someone naked as a punishment for adultery. It's the context of the act that makes it shameful and not nakedness itself.

**But regardless whether Peter is in his birthday suit or his skivvies, he feels he should put on something a little more appropriate for greeting Jesus, even if it will be soaking wet by the time he reaches him. Had he not, I think it would have been fine. Jesus had probably grown accustomed to Peter being a little bit weird by this point.**

**But I think Peter needed to do this to help get ready. Clearly, despite Jesus' appearances and urgings, he and his companions just weren't there yet. Last week's Gospel text showed us Jesus encouraging the Twelve to get out from behind shut-up doors and go forgive sins, retain sins, get back out among the people again. Well, they got as far as leaving the upper room behind but I don't think Jesus meant them to go back to the old fisherman's life.**

**They did what people often do. Go back to what is comfortable, what we know, try to clear our heads, when something life-changing occurs. Whether it's something good or bad.**

**Evidently, these guys needed a bit more prodding. But first, there's clothing oneself as appropriate for the moment, demonstrated by Peter. There's being reminded in that old, familiar activity of fishing that you'll come up empty by your own efforts, but Jesus provides an abundance -- an abundant catch in this particular instance. And there's comfort food that Jesus serves up, hot off the fire.**

**I'm reminded of the early days of the pandemic. Not knowing quite what to do. Languishing for days and then finding eventually, that some mornings I had to get up, get dressed, have breakfast -- even if I wasn't going anywhere -- to feel some sense of stability again.**

**I think by this lakeside, just as Jesus is about to launch into a teaching and reconciliation with Peter that's all about love, he is demonstrating some of the delicate balance that comes with love. He comes to help his friends out and then makes a nice meal. Then he sits down to dish out some tough love.**

**The pattern of their talk is an obvious parallel to Peter's denying Jesus three times. I think Peter recognizes that and as it gets closer to completion, he feels it. That feeling in the pit of the gut. He knows Jesus knows he loves him. He says as much. But not without feeling the pain of facing the one whom he loves but he also hurt. I think we have all had that conversation with someone at one time or another and it's really hard to do, but so necessary.**

**In this intimate discussion, I think Peter is made ready. Until that point, he wasn't prepared to feed Jesus' sheep, that is, to serve his neighbors in need. To follow the path Jesus had shown him. Not without that tender forgiveness. I don't think he could have coped with the prophecy about his fate either until that happened.**

**But Jesus knows each one of us intimately, knows what we need to be ready for the kingdom work that lies ahead. It's not preparation we can do entirely on our own. And it comes with an invitation and a simple dress code: Come as you are.**