

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We heard at the first reading from the Acts, that the Pharisees were angry with the apostles after Jesus' death and cited them even to court. The charge against them was continuing teaching in "His Name" who was counted among sinners. Of course they referred to Jesus and his teachings but they did not even want to mention his name while speaking about him. He was counted among sinners so lost the right of mentioning his name publicly even after his death. The apostles got punishment for their acts, but they were proud of suffering for Jesus' name and continued teaching, talking about Jesus' testimony of God's love. What gave them the force, the spirit, the strength to do so? We just hear about it from the gospel.

Let us first of all look at Jesus' disciples. Not very perfect men, full of weaknesses just like us. Yet they become brave and strong when they experience their master's presence. We have the same master, we have the same teacher: Jesus.

After Jesus' death all hope and faith of the disciples disappeared, vanished. In the big silence Simon Peter was the first who said: "I go back to fishing". It used to be his life before he met Jesus, it was his profession where he experienced success, it was the source of his incomes to give bread to his family. His fellows also joined Peter soon "we go with you" – they said.

The apostles have done what they thought was the right thing: have gone back to fishing, the only thing that meant safety for them after the shocking events of Easter, the disturbing and painful end of their beliefs and faith in Jesus' mission. But even here in fishing they have experienced utter failure.

That night they catch nothing according to apostle John the eyewitness. They knew very well, that at night the fish come up close to the surface of the water, so they can catch them. (The upper part of the lake, no more than 2-3 meters are useful for fishing, although the lake is more than 60 meters deep.)

The night is almost over, it is dawn and there stands Jesus on the shore while they are coming closer to fix the boats and clean their empty nets. But the disciples did not recognise Jesus. They saw a stranger just like those two walking towards Emmaus a few days before. Jesus takes the first step in both cases towards them asking about their night of fishing, the causes of their present feelings.

The disciples admit they have failed at fishing, and Jesus tells them, *Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.* They could hear this as the idle suggestion of a bystander. But He doesn't offer a suggestion; he gives a promise that in fact they will find fish where he directs them to cast. Why do they believe him? Why do they obey this strange command of a bystander at dawn when fishing time is over? It seems to be a mystery. It is that the disciples do not know who he was at first but they went back out. Is it their desperation for a catch,

a love of task, a desire for success, a sense of the specialness of the man calling them to return to their task, or something else? Whatever it was, they ventured back out and found huge success. Their nets were overflowing. When they obey they cannot even get the net into the boat because there are so many fish enclosed in it. Such abundance echoes the enormous provision of wine at the wedding in Cana, and of bread and fish at the feeding of the five thousand. The shocking amount of the fish might have recalled a memory of Jesus' original call, "Come, follow me... and I will make you fishers of men".

The apostles need the lesson repeated, as we often do as well. The miraculous sign of the nets suddenly full of fish after a whole bitterly useless night of fishing make the disciples remember Jesus immediately. "It is the Lord!" - said John the beloved disciple.

Another turning point of the story comes early in the morning, perhaps symbolizing the dawning of spiritual light. Jesus is described again as simply standing there, without a description of his arrival on the spot. Also as earlier, they are not able to recognize him at first. Jesus takes the initiative and calls to them: *Friends, haven't you any fish?* The question is put in a form that expects a negative answer. This might have been the common way of asking a hunter or fisherman whether they had had success, but in this case the one asking already knows the answer. The word translated *friends (paideiai)* is more literally "children" or even "little children". In that morning Christ is not only present here but also eats with his disciples, giving a most full assurance of his risen body (he is not a ghost). He eats with the apostles after his execution, despite, he does not need food. And he does not simply eat, but asks for food from the disciples. He asks from the fish they have just brought from the sea. He asks from their fruit of their successful fishing. It seems to be important to him to share their joy of success and encourages them to enjoy the result of their work.

Sharing food means sharing life. And it is at this meal that they receive a recommissioning from the Lord. They are reminded who they are and what they were originally called to be. Their faith is restored by the slow realization of the new dimension God offers through Christ's resurrection. Resurrection, which means, something really shockingly good news: Jesus is alive, he is with us, he is among us for ever. He is with them, giving back all the hope they have almost given up after Easter. All this means a new dimension in the relationship between God and men. Christ Jesus is alive, he is with us. Can we recognise the reality of this fact after two thousand years again and again? He, the Risen One is with us, he is among us for ever!