**HOLY WEEK – HOLY THURSDAY**



 **Simon-Peter**

 **The Fisherman and his Ambitions**

Jesus was very right in choosing Simon to be one of his disciples. Jesus looked at Simon and saw the future of this simple fisherman. He changed his name from Simon to Peter, meaning “rock”. The question then remains as to why Jesus chose this “rock-like” person as his disciple. Perhaps this and more questions will be answered by reflecting on Simon-Peter’s life.

**1. Simon’s Life and Career**

By reading the Holy Bible, most people know of Simon as a fisherman. Fishermen are generally regarded as simple, peaceful and honest people. With the exception of unruly pirates, other fishermen are considered amiable. They don’t usually boast a high education but their simple and humble countenance is truly admirable. In this particular group of fishermen, Simon appeared to be blunt, forthright and on occasions hot-tempered. It is a mystery in itself that with these less than perfect attributes, he was chosen by Jesus.

Simon had a wife which we know about through the story in the Holy Bible, (Mt 7: 14-15; MK 1: 29-31; LK 4: 38-39) of when Simon invited Jesus home to heal his mother-in-law. However we do not know if he had any children as the Holy Bible does not refer to this detail.

With such an ordinary background as this, if he were not called by Jesus to become one of his disciples, then Simon would have remained a nameless being in history, like millions of other men without consequence. Isn’t it strange then that Jesus chose such an undistinguished person to be at the foundation of his work?

**2. Background and Ambition**

Simon’s role started when Jesus began his work of preaching the Good News of Salvation. Jesus did not preach by himself. Instead, he gathered around himself a small community made up of a selected few, whom he called his disciples, to journey with him in order to listen and absorb his teachings. Simon was one of the first chosen to follow Jesus and once chosen, Jesus changed his name from Simon to Peter.

Peter along with the other disciples followed Jesus on his journey from Judea to Jerusalem. They passed Jericho and went all the way to the coastal regions of Tyro and Sidon and then continued on to Galilee. They followed Jesus everywhere he went to knowing they were working for the greater good. Peter witnessed all that Jesus did. He was there when Jesus performed the fish and bread miracle to feed thousands. He was there when Jesus healed the lepers and saw how Jesus cured the mute, the deaf, the blind and he was even there when he was able to revive the dead. Peter saw things that he had never seen in his life before and now they were being performed before his very eyes.

He was delighted with thoughts of future grandeur. Peter figured out that with all he had seen Jesus do and with the fact that he had been faithfully following him, he would be guaranteed a high place in Jesus’ “kingdom” on a glorious day not too far away. He thought Rome would fall under Jesus’ command. How wonderful it must have been – the feeling of being important and having all that power at his finger tips. His elevation from a nameless fisherman to an important member of Jesus’ court, acquiring respect and adoration from so many people would be a pleasant change indeed. With the prospect of such a happy future view, Peter could not help allowing a satisfied smile.

Peter remembered back to the first day after he became a disciple. Jesus had taken their whole group to join in a celebration marking a wedding in Cana. In the middle of the festivities the wine had run out. This was when Jesus performed a miracle turning water into wine, which allowed the guests to continue celebrating. After witnessing such an extraordinary sight, Peter could not help but congratulate himself on making an alliance with Jesus, all the time thinking to himself: “How fortunate that I’m with Jesus. Now I will not have to worry about ever going hungry again!”

So, apart from continuing his work as a fisherman as a means to feed his family, the rest of the time, Peter followed Jesus in the hope of obtaining the grand future which he had envisioned. Peter also witnessed when Jesus entered the temple overturning money changing tables, reprimanding the stall holders and chasing everyone out. Peter was surprised at these actions and thought to himself: “Only officers or nasty Roman soldiers have the authority to do such things. How does a common Jew dare lay any claim to such power? Actions like those by Jesus would only lead to being beaten to death or would guarantee a spot to rot in jail. And yet there he is doing these very things.” Yet Peter celebrated silently: “This is truly who we have been waiting for. This is the person that will deliver us away from the harsh ruling of Rome”.

Peter’s ambitions were like a sail catching wind. His happiness heightened exponentially with time. Until one day.....

It was the day Peter proclaimed Jesus as the rightful Son of God, the giver of life and also the day Jesus officially announced Peter’s authority and mission (Mt 16: 13-20). Peter was overcome with happiness because he thought his dream of grandeur was fast coming and he was pleased to have his future power so publicly announced in front of all his fellow disciples! He reflected he would be the head of Jesus’ kingdom. The prestige of being below one but ahead of so many! He couldn’t even begin to describe such happiness.

But all of a sudden, before his dreams were reached, everything came tumbling down: Jesus announced he would set off for Jerusalem, where he would suffer under the hands of advisors, members of the counsel and judges. They would kill him and on the third day he would rise again. On hearing Jesus saying: “I will die”, Peter’s eyes widened with surprise. He hurried to Jesus, took him aside and whispered:

*- “Never, Lord! No, this must never happen to you.”* (Mt 16: 22)

Jesus immediately reproached him for this:

*- “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me. Your thoughts are not from God but from man.”* (Mt 16: 23)

Out of spirits, Peter stood to one side, frowned and drooped his head as he let his dreams slip away....

Through this reprimand, Jesus wanted to teach Peter that the main attribute which would mark his disciples would be their sense of self-sacrifice and to obtain this they would need to give up all notions that are deemed worldly. In other words, to follow in Jesus’ footsteps, disciples have to learn from the example of their Master Jesus as the one who has everything but has given it all up for Redeeming Love, so that all our sins will be forgiven. Without this sacrifice, such a deed of Redemption could not be possible.

But this degree of sacrifice was too much to ask of Peter. He didn’t want to leave everything behind to follow Jesus and end up with nothing! He figured: Jesus is almighty and powerful. He has the ability to do anything. It is not possible that Jesus would let him go back empty handed? “Surely, at the very least,” Peter thought, “I must be able to inherit something from all this!” This kind of thought made him restless, and urged him into saying to Jesus:

*- “Look, we have given up everything to follow you”* (Mk 10: 28), don’t we get anything from this at all?

To this Jesus replied:

*- “Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the Good News who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age - houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields, with persecutions - and in the age to come eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first.”* (Mk 10: 29-30)

Hearing this Peter’s hope was restored. Even James and John, the sons of Zebedee, joined Peter in his ambitions and they requested of Jesus:

*- “Teacher, grant us to sit one at your right hand and one at your left when you come into your glory.”* (Mk 10: 37)

On seeing the two brothers, sons of Zebedee asking this of Jesus, Peter had grown uneasy and thought to himself: “There is no way you will be granted your request! Teacher has chosen me as leader. You’ll need to pass through me first!”

Meanwhile, Jesus’ proclaimed prophecy of having to travel to Jerusalem where he would meet his fate was gradually but surely falling into place....Jesus requested that his disciples travel with him to Jericho and go from there to Jerusalem. On their journey, Jesus healed a blind beggar named Bartimaeus (Mk 10: 46-52). Seeing another miracle being performed, Peter’s hope continued to grow. Peter predicted that Jesus would perform his biggest miracle in Jerusalem and his kingdom would be established there. With this in mind he travelled with Jesus and the other disciples to Jerusalem with enthusiasm.

In Jerusalem, Peter heard of the plot to arrest Jesus made by the advisors, members of the counsel and judges. However even when hearing all this, Peter thought nothing of it. He thought it was impossible for them to ever capture Jesus and that to even touch him would bring death to anyone who dared to try it. Peter remembered back to the woman who had suffered from a haemorrhage for 12 years. While Jesus was walking through the crowd she had managed to touch his cloak and was immediately healed (Mk 5: 25-34). Who would dare touch someone with such power!

Passover was fast approaching and Jesus wanted to eat the Passover with his beloved disciples. He asked his disciples to prepare for the Passover Feast (Mk 14: 12-16; Mt 26: 17-19; Lk 22: 7-13). During the Supper, for the love of his disciples, Jesus performed the Holy Eucharist, so he could remain with them (Mk 14: 22-25; Mt 26: 26-30; Lk 22: 19-20; 1Cor 11: 23-25). Following this he bent down and washed their feet to teach them to always be humble and selfless on their journey as witnesses of the Good News. Peter felt uncomfortable about this and he hurried to say:

*- “Lord, do you mean to wash my feet!”* (Jn 13: 6)

Without regard to what Peter had said, Jesus continued. Peter was indignant at the spectacle of his Master washing the feet of disciples and he stubbornly exclaimed:

*- “No, you shall never wash my feet.”* (Jn 13: 8)

Seeing Peter’s reluctance to comply, Jesus answered:

*- “If I do not wash your feet, you have no share with me.”* (Jn 13: 8)

Hearing Jesus mention a “share”, Peter complied:

*- “Then, Lord, wash not my feet, but also my hands and my head!”* (Jn 13: 9)

Alongside his ambition to become grand and important, Peter was also worried about losing his “share”. He wanted to ensure that he would always be rewarded with the biggest share. But Jesus refused to indulge him and did not wash his hands or head but only his feet. Jesus wanted to teach Peter to be humble and selfless. He wanted to raise in him the desire to serve others for the Kingdom of God – God’s kingdom is not for the ambitious, the top ranked, the boastful or for those who consider themselves above others. Jesus clearly told them:

*- “Whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all.”* (Mk 10: 43-44)

Jesus taught the Kingdom of God is only for those who are humble and willing to love others. To Jesus, love and humility marked the maturity of virtues that he wanted to see in his disciples, because how could anyone serve others without love? And how could one love without humbling themselves first? Following this view, Jesus said:

*- “For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.”* (Mk 10: 45)

Peter did not understand what Jesus meant. He only knew that Jesus offered him some sort of knighthood and that he would become a person of great importance. These thoughts were all that occupied his head. So when Jesus said:

*- “You will all desert me tonight;* for Scripture says*, ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.’”* (Mk 14: 27; Zech 13: 7)

... Peter quickly replied:

*- “Even though all desert you, I will not.”* (Mt 26: 33; Mk 14: 29)

But Jesus answered:

*- “Truly, I say to you, today, this very night, before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times.”* (Mk 14: 30; Mt 26: 34; Lk 22: 34; Jn 13: 38)

Hearing him say this, Peter snickered: How could I betray my Master?!

**3. Peter’s Denial**

After the Passover Feast, where they shared in thanks and praise, Jesus took them all to the Mount of Olives. Jesus instructed all to remain there with the exception of three disciples, Peter, James and John, whom he wanted to come and pray with him. It is these three disciples that Jesus had chosen to take up to the High Mountain to witness his transfiguration. (Mk 9:2-10) At that moment, Peter was mesmerised by the overwhelming power and glory of Jesus’ love; and when asked to follow Jesus, Peter obeyed more enthusiastically than ever before. At the right spot, Jesus instructed his three disciples to sit under a tree and wait for him. Jesus walked further along by himself, then knelt down to pray to God in the vast stillness of his surroundings. Deep in prayer, Jesus saw the horrific scenes of his own crucifixion: the way he would be beaten, prodded, and sneered at, his bloodied body hardly resembling the human form. All this was to be his future!

It was fast approaching night. The moon-light shone brightly down on Jesus as if to witness the moment of fear and pain of the one who was about to be executed. Every now and then, the soft echoes of crickets and insects of the night played their soundtrack with the melancholy and plaintive sounds, while the wind whispered its condolences. The overwhelming sadness in Jesus’ soul seemed to be transcribed into a shiver of his frame. The most poignant pain, caused the greatest strain on him and *“his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down on the ground.”* (Lk 22: 43). In great earnest he prayed to God:

*- “Father, if it is your will, remove this cup from me; yet not my will but yours be done.”* (Lk 22: 42; Mt 26: 39; Mk 14: 36)

Jesus’ prayer floated into empty space and was swallowed in the silence of the night without any reply from his Father. Jesus accepts God’s will:

*- “Father, if this cup cannot be taken away from me without drinking it, let your will be done.”* (Mt 26: 42)

In his boundless sadness and loneliness, Jesus went to his disciples in the hope of finding some sort of consolation. However, when he reached them, they had all fallen fast asleep. The steady breathing and snoring from his close disciples confirmed in him his loneliness. He looked across at Peter, the most enthusiastic of them all, but who was now deep in slumber. Jesus then said:

*- “Simon, are you sleeping? Could you not stay awake for even one hour? Keep watch and pray, so that you may not fall into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak.”* (Mk 14: 37-38)

Jesus then said to all his other disciples also sleeping:

*- “Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! The time has come; the Son of Man is now being betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up, let us go. Look, the one betraying me is right here.”* (Mk 14: 41; Mt 26: 45-46; Lk 22: 45-46)

From afar, the flickering lights belonging to those coming to arrest Jesus could be seen. Informed by Judas, whose greed has tempted him to betray Jesus, the officials were approaching. The loud demands for Jesus woke his disciples. Startled from their sleep, they did not know what was happening. Even when Jesus had foretold of his own arrest, they had paid little attention as each was blindly following his own assumptions and ambitions. Too preoccupied with their own thoughts, they had not taken his words seriously. Now, everything was happening as foretold pulling them out of their dream-like state of mind.

Finally, Jesus and his disciples were surrounded by those who had come to capture them with Judas leading them. The fake kiss given by Judas was such that was a reminder of how one kiss could be given from deep genuine feelings and another from the most painful betrayal. After the kiss, the disciples were forced to face the realities of Jesus’ arrest. Enraged by the event taking place, they ventured to protect Jesus (Lk 22:49). In his rage, Peter took a sword and dismembered an ear of an official’s guard who had taken hold of Jesus. At this, Jesus reprimanded Peter’s actions and healed the servant’s ear. (Lk 22: 50-51)

Peter was shocked by Jesus’ words towards him. He could not understand why Jesus had reprimanded him. He had done this for Jesus’ protection! He thought inwardly: “So much for that! Jesus has just allowed the guards to arrest him without doing anything to them. Not only that, but when I had cut off that guard’s ear to save him, he had yelled at me for it and healed him! Could it be that what Jesus had foretold about his suffering and death would become reality?”

There was no way Peter could begin to understand. The fervent and ambitious nature of Peter rendered him motionless. The guards arrested Jesus and took him away....

Seeing his Master taken away like a common criminal, Peter followed behind with a heavy heart.

When they reached the court grounds, Peter had to stay behind because only officials and guards who had arrested Jesus were allowed to enter....

The night had grown colder and most people were gathering around their fire. Peter was by himself and had no coal or wood to make him a fire. While standing idly outside the courtyard looking in, a servant girl spotted him and came up to ask:

*- “You also were with Jesus the Galilean.”* (Mt 26: 69)

Peter was still upset with Jesus and for fear the servant girl might report him, he denied this straight out:

*- “I do not know what you are talking about.”* (Mt 26: 70)

After denying that he knew Jesus, Peter then went out to the porch. He was on his way out when he was confronted by another servant girl, who said to the people standing by her:

*- “This man was with Jesus of Nazareth.”* (Mt 26: 71)

Peter again denied it:

*- “I do not know that man.”* (Mt 26: 72)

After denying he knew Jesus twice and with his mind at peace, Peter thought to himself: “Surely no one else knows of my involvement. Even Jesus, with all that power was arrested and could not do anything. Who am I to be so foolish in order to own up to any involvement with him!” While he was still lost in his own ponderings, a bystander saw that Peter looked like someone they knew. They approached him and said:

*- “Of course you are one of the Galileans; your accent gives you away.”* (Mt 26: 73)

At that comment Peter began to curse, and he swore an oath:

*- “I do not know the man!”* (Mt 26: 74)

The bystanders thought it was strange that he should swear so, when they had seen him travelling with Jesus! Peter did not mind that they had recognised him. As long as he denied it, there was nothing they could do.

**4. Peter’s Repentance**

It was far into the night and the dark night sank deeper and deeper into the quiet. But the crackling sounds of the fire, together with the whispers and comments of those who had ganged up to catch Jesus, could be heard very distinctly. Suddenly, there was the echo of a cock-crow from afar. Peter heard it as a sad reminder...

 The cock-crow is a sound which Peter had heard every night as a call for fishermen to go casting fish. But tonight, that sound seems to be different. It made Peter’s heart slack. In the immensity of the quiet night, Peter’s heart seemed to be broken into pieces. He sneaked into the darkness, going slowly to a quiet corner of the courtyard. Bearing a bitter and shameful feeling in his heart, he sat down. Holding his head in his hands, he sobbed as if he has never cried before. The sound of a cock-crow seemed to be an echo of Jesus’ reproach:

 - *“Truly I tell you, today, this very night, before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times.”* (Mk 14: 30; Lk 22: 34; Mt 26: 34; Jn 13: 38).

 The more Peter thought of his Master, the more he felt a wrench in his heart. His soul seemed to be scratched by a long, dark and ugly stain. He cried in a deep feeling of sadness and pain. The dark corner of the courtyard was like his empty heart! He wanted to shout loudly in order to chase away the loneliness of his heart. He wanted to scream in order to decrease his pain. He wanted to cry loudly to calm down his shamefulness due to denying his Master. The more he wanted this, the more his throat seemed to be choked. There were only two lines of tears falling down from his eyes. In the depth of his repentance, Peter spoke softly in a choky voice:

*“Master, I am sorry!*

*I am sorry millions of times for my sins.*

*My weakness made my pure heart impure.*

*My tears now symbolise my repentance from a broken heart of pain.*

*Master! Do you forgive me?*

*Forgive me for three times I denied you.*

*Forgive me for being loved by you and I don’t love you back.*

*Forgive me for the worldly ambitions that blurred my eyes and mind.*

*Forgive me for denying the supreme love that you gave me.*

*I understand now the meaning of love that you sacrificed yourself.*

*I am now penetrated with the words you taught*

*and moved by the pulse of your loving heart in me.*

*Master! Please excuse me for my sins,*

*The weak condition in a human-being.*

*May my tears of penance be mingled in your loving forgiveness*

 *so I can live in you for ever.”*

Those who accused and caught Jesus were happy as if they were taking part in a festival. But on the contrary, in a dark corner of the courtyard, there was a man who was twinging with his pain of betraying...

With a feeling of repentance in an empty heart, Peter stood up lonely and went home as if he was going into the immensity of nature. Nobody knew of his heart, except God...

The laughings, shoutings, mockings and cursings being thrown at Jesus behind Peter’s back were like needles sticking in Peter’s heart. Peter knew that in the hands of these frenzied and ungrateful people, Jesus would be tortured and murdered. Jesus would die...

**5. Peter and his feeling of coming back**

Peter’s tears of penance after the cock-crow made his energetic-temper die down. He was not as zealous, blunt and free-spoken as before. Each of his steps was becoming a reminder of his Master’s words.

 He reflected: “Now, Jesus is dead. They beat him. They tortured him. They crucified him. He died and they buried him. Then a stone against the door of the tomb was rolled (Mk 15: 46). It’s finished!”

 Peter’s ambition was buried together in the tomb with his Master. He no longer thought of his ambition to become a “high official in Jesus’ earthly empire”. The only thing he had in his mind now was his fond remembrance and his love for his Master. Each of his own steps, words and deeds seemed to be a reminder of his Master’s presence. The other disciples had gone home as well and were living their own ordinary life. Each one had his own business...

 Suddenly, on the first day of the week, after three days Jesus had been buried in the tomb, Peter was informed that his Master’s body was no longer in the tomb. It disappeared! Being surprised to the highest degree, Peter rushed to the tomb in order to check. Exactly as it was said, the body of his Master disappeared from the tomb (Jn 20: 1-10. Mt 28: 1-10; Mk 16: 1-11; Lk 24: 1-12).

The fact that the body of Jesus disappeared makes Peter anxious. He thinks: “Who stole Jesus’ body? And for what? Or Jesus rose again? How can the resurrection occur? From time immemorial up to now, never has a person who died, rose again!”

 So many questions arose in Peter’s head. Again, a rumour spread around that Jesus appeared to such and such person...

 Peter convened a secret meeting with the other disciples in order to have a thorough grasp of the situation. While they were meeting in a locked-door house for fear of the Jews, Jesus appeared among them. They were afraid, and then astonished and finally rejoiced when they saw the Lord (Jn 20: 19-23). A week later, the Lord Jesus appeared again with the disciples when they were in a closed-tight room. This time present among them was Thomas who had declared that he did not believe in the physical appearance of Jesus:

*- “Until I have seen in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand into his side, I will not believe.”* (Jn 20: 25).

The Lord Jesus appeared among them and then asked Thomas to do exactly as he had declared before. Thomas was stunned and afraid! The fear made his hair stand on end. He stared at Jesus in a panic stricken manner and with a quivering voice, he said:

*- “My Lord and my God.”* (Jn 20: 28).

 Nobody believed their eyes, because ten days ago, it was this Man – Jesus – was crucified, died on the cross and was buried. Now he rose again and appeared in flesh and blood! Before seeing again the Lord, Thomas was correct when he affirmed that the appearance was just a fabulous story. The sentence to death by crucifixion was the cruellest punishment in human history. Had anyone ever been tortured, crucified and then risen again? If Jesus was still alive on the cross, his legs would be broken to death like the other two thieves who were crucified together with him. Moreover, Thomas was right to think that, “How could Jesus survive when he was pierced by a lance to his heart?” So, for Thomas, the resurrection was just an exaggerated story like a ghost story!

 However, the unbelievable story became a reality in front of Thomas’ eyes and he believed, like other disciples, including Peter, who witnessed the resurrection of Jesus and believed.

 Yes! True fishermen are generally regarded as gentle, simple and honest people. They are trustworthy! Although their character is described as blunt, forthright and hot-tempered, they say what they see. If they have an ambition of changing their lives, their ambition would be as clear as the day. The kind of ambition of changing lives has been seen as typical among the disciples through the character of Peter.

**6. Peter’s changing life**

Jesus’ disciples were so happy to see again their Master. They forgot the past with their worldly ambition. They felt the warmth of Jesus’ love which seemed to be enkindling in their heart. So, they were close to each other and loved each other more deeply.

 One day, not far away from the appearance of Jesus, Peter said to his friend-disciples:

*- “I am going fishing.”* (Jn 21: 3).

They said to him:

*- “We will go with you.”* (Jn 21: 3).

However, they could not catch any fish for the whole night...

 At the first streak of dawn, when they were gathering up the fishing nets and pulling their boat ashore, Jesus appeared on the beach. He asked them if they caught any fish during the night. They could not recognise it was Jesus and answered:

*- “Nothing.”* (Jn 21: 5)

He said to them:

*- “Throw the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some.”* (Jn 21: 6)



They thought he was a fisherman seeing a school of fish from the shore and therefore, they obeyed him and cast the net. When they pulled the net up, they could not haul it, because there were so many fish caught in the net. (Jn 21: 6). At that time, John realised it was Jesus and said to Peter:

*- “It is the Lord!”* (Jn 21: 7)

Upon hearing John say that it was the Lord, Peter put on some clothes and jumped into the sea to come to his Master...

 Peter’s tears of penance diminished a part of his feelings of sin and shame of denying his Master. At that moment, Peter just wanted to be close as much as he could to the Lord. He wanted to be close to the heart of Jesus with his whole mind and body. He did not want to be a “highly-placed official” any longer. Peter’s ambition had drifted away together with his tears of penance. Jesus was all for him now. To be close to Jesus and to hear him made him happy. For Peter, Jesus was the almighty but he humbled himself to be tortured and humiliated. Peter realised he was nothing compared with Jesus! Temporary ambitions are like the bubbles of water flowing and disappearing. It is only Jesus who is to be nurtured and embraced in life...

 Peter was absorbed in thinking on these lines... Suddenly, Jesus called:

 - *“Come and have breakfast.”* (Jn 21: 12).

 All the disciples came, because they recognised it was Jesus.

 After finishing their breakfast, the Lord Jesus looked at Peter and asked him:

 - *“Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?”* (Jn 21: 15)

 Peter seemed to wake up from dreaming, his heart blossomed as if it was the first time he knew how to love. He answered: “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” (Jn 21: 15). The affirmation of Peter’s answer seemed to wipe away his first denial of his Master after the cock crow. Jesus said to Peter:

 - *“Feed my lambs.”* (Jn 21: 15)

 Peter’s ambition to become a “high official” on earth was transformed by the Lord to be a “high official” in the Kingdom of God. Jesus looked at Peter and asked him the second time:

 - *“Simon son of John, do you love me?”* (Jn 21: 16)

 Peter did not hesitate. He had already made up his mind. His life belongs totally to Jesus. Jesus is now the only one he loves. He answers affirmatively:

 - *“Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.”* (Jn 21: 16)

 As with the first one, Peter’s second affirmation of love erased the sin of his second denial of his Master. Peter felt so happy when he spoke out his love truly from his heart. Jesus said to Peter:

 - *“Tend my sheep.”* (21: 16).

 A few minutes later, with the same loving eyes, Jesus looked at Peter and asked:

 - *“Simon, son of John, do you love me?”* (Jn 21: 17)

 Peter felt hurt and sad because Jesus asked him the third time, “Do you love me?”. He asks himself, “Why did Jesus not believe me?”. Although being sad in his heart, Peter just wanted to affirm his love for his Lord, because Jesus was now the only aim of his life. So, he slowly answered his Lord with his wholehearted love:

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

 Upon hearing Peter’s third answer, Jesus said to Peter:

 - *“Feed my sheep.”* (Jn 21: 17)

 Peter did not understand his Master’s thought and the reason why his Master asked him three times, “Do you love me?”. The three times Peter was asked are the three times the Lord Jesus wants to hear clearly Peter’s affirmation of love for his Master from his heart and his mouth. Peter denied his Master three times and those three times were the three affirmative denials, “I do not know the man!”. Now, Jesus wants Peter to confirm three times his love for his Master in order to wipe off his denials on that dark night. This morning, Peter’s three times of “words of love” became three bright candles in his heart, guiding and leading him on his earthly journey to spread the Gospel the Kingdom of God and the Salvation of Souls.



 Peter changed his life totally. He was no longer a fisherman of the earthly sea, but a fisherman *“for people”* (Mt 4: 19; Mk 1: 17). He would be *“catching people”* (Lk 5: 10) for the ocean of God’s Kingdom. The ambition to be “high” had become a reality, not for the worldly objective, but for a heavenly purpose. He wished to become a leader in order to guide and his desire had been fulfilled. The Lord Jesus put him in the exact position which he desired. From now on, he was going to feed and look after a whole “flock of lambs”. The difference was that he had to build up his flock by himself by gathering the scattered “lambs” in the world to be in one unified flock under his leadership, in the faith that the Lord Jesus was journeying with him.

 And he exercised the command of his Master Jesus until the end of his life... **“Follow me!”** (Jn 21: 19).

Asking for a Grace:

*The Lord Jesus called Peter to follow him. That call seems to be an echo in my mind and my heart to follow Jesus. I would like to offer to my Lord Jesus a Special Prayer:*

**A Prayer from the Heart.**

**Lord, God of Love,**

**Teach me how to love but only with a sacred love.**

**Help me how to feel but only with a heart that has belonged to you.**

**Teach me how to enjoy the beauty of creation but only with the admiration of a redemptive love.**

**Help me to accept unjust judgments with a deep love for you.**

**Help me to smile when being slandered or accused wrongly as a way of unification with the Loved One.**

**Help me to be humble in confronting sufferings and humiliations as a way of being one with the One I love.**

**Amen.**