



REFLECTIONS ON TODAY'S SCRIPTURE READINGS

The follow are reflections on today's scripture readings.

FIRST READING: Acts 5:27-32, 40-41

In today's first reading, we notice a rising tension between the Jewish authorities and the disciples of Jesus. It is a struggle between *light* and *darkness* as in Jesus' time. Filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, the Apostles will not be silenced. Peter, the former coward and "denier" now becomes a courageous proclaimer. The Apostles are full of joy that they were found worthy of ill treatment for the sake of Jesus. Jesus' resurrection is always central to their witness. We may not be dragged before a court of law to defend our commitment to Jesus, but each of us stands daily before the court of Public Opinion to give an account of our faith life.

Reflection Question

How do you feel about sharing your faith with others? If the opportunity presents itself, are you strong enough to share your faith? Or is your faith one of your better kept secrets?

SECOND READING Revelations 5:11-14

The second reading takes us to a heavenly realm where there is a victory celebration taking place for Jesus, the victorious Lamb who has returned home to heaven and to God having conquered sin and death. *Seven* great possessions of the victorious Lamb are mentioned: *power, riches, wisdom, strength, honor, glory and blessing.*

In the Eucharistic celebration, we sing of the "*Lamb of God* who takes away the sins of the world." Our earthly liturgies seek to pattern themselves after the heavenly liturgy described here. Both seek to give fitting honor and praise to the Lamb of God.

GOSPEL: John 21:1-19

The locale of the Resurrection appearance is the Sea of Galilee. A group of apostles have gone out to fish, following the lead of Peter. The author (writing 60 or 70 years later) wants to present Peter as *leader* of the newly formed church. As you know, John's Gospel is full of symbolism and today's passage is an excellent example of this. *Fishing* symbolizes the Church's movement to bring Good News to others. The *boat* symbolizes the Church into which Jesus wishes to gather people. The fishing is done at *night*, which in John's Gospel means unbelief or life without Jesus. Without Jesus, they catch no fish. At *daybreak*, Jesus appears and under his direction, an exceptionally big catch occurs. The obvious point is that successful evangelization only occurs when our efforts depend on Jesus. One hundred and fifty-three fish

represent *every* type of fish. The Church is open to *all* kinds of people. The net does not tear despite the big load of fish. This is a reference to the *unity* of the Church. God's Will is that the Church remains in unity despite its *vast* and *diverse* membership.

The Lord is first recognized by "the disciple Jesus loved", John (love helps us to recognize Christ's presence). The meal of bread and fish, prepared by Jesus, has obvious Eucharistic overtones. Listen to the words of Jesus: "He took the bread" and "gave it" to them.

Then Jesus "rehabilitates" Peter as a disciple. Peter's threefold denial of Jesus left him in need of healing and reconciliation. In this passage, Jesus helps Peter to get in touch with the depth of love he has for his Master. Having done this, Jesus installs Peter as the leader of the apostles and Early Church. As we read through the Acts of the Apostles, we clearly see that Peter is the chief spokesperson, just as the Pope is the chief spokesperson for our Catholic family.

A Good Story for Parents with Teenagers.

Reflecting on today's gospel, Jay Cormier writes:

Bobby messed up—big time. Mom and Dad let him take the car Saturday night to take his girlfriend to the movies. Well, things got out of hand. On the way, they picked up a friend and then another friend. . . Bobby wasn't paying attention as he should have and ran a red light. . . He was stopped by the police. . . An open container (not Bobby's) was found in the back seat . . . His parents were called. Without a word, Bobby handed over his set of car keys to Mom and Dad—and didn't expect to see them for a long time.

The following Monday, Mom asked Bobby if he could take his grandmother to her doctor's appointment after school. Sure, Bobby said, and Mom gave him the keys. Bobby got Grams to the doctor on time, waited for her, and then took her to the mall to do some errands. They both had a great time. Returning home, Bobby handed the keys back to Mom.

A couple of days later, Mom was delayed at work. She called Bobby and asked him to pick up something for dinner. Sure, he said. He took the keys from his dad's desk drawer and headed downtown. He saw some of his friends from school. They were on their way to the mall asked him to go along. No, he said, he had to take care of some stuff. Bobby picked up dinner and got it home. He helped his Mom and sister unpack everything and set the table. Then Bobby returned the keys to his dad's desk.

On Saturday, Bobby was in his room when his dad came in. Would Bobby take a run to the nursery and pick up some bags of top soil and mulch? Dad tossed the keys to Bobby and Bobby headed out. He returned a hour later with the material. He then spent the morning helping his dad spread the mulch

and plant new shrubs and spring flowers in the yard.

When they both went in for lunch, Bobby handed the keys to his father.

"No," his dad said matter-of-factly, "you hold on to them."

Bobby's Mom and Dad understand that just as they must hold their son accountable for what he had done, they also must give Bobby a chance to restore their trust in him.

That's what Jesus does for Peter in today's Gospel. In asking Peter to profess his love three times, Jesus is not taunting Peter but calling Peter to move beyond the past in order to take on the new challenges of apostleship. In forgiving Peter as he does, in affecting reconciliation with Peter, Jesus transforms Peter's regret and shame into a new understanding and conviction of the Gospel the fisherman has witnessed. The Easter Christ calls us to embrace that same model of forgiveness: to possess the greatness of heart to forgive and seek forgiveness; to seek to rebuild and restore trust with those from whom are estranged, with those we have hurt and who have hurt us, with all who "mess up" - big time.

Reflection Questions

How do you think and feel about how the parents dealt with their teenage son? How would you have handled the situation?

Reflection on Failure

Reflecting on today's Gospel, Fr. John Vella writes:

Much of our reading for today puts the spotlight on Peter. It's good to think about Peter because we have so much to learn as we examine his relationship to Jesus. Jesus' reaction to Peter's denial doesn't make sense, does it? Jesus doesn't seem to have been put off by the way Peter treated him. Instead of throwing Peter out of the group of the chosen ones, he gives him a special responsibility in his Church. Jesus did not treat Peter as a failure, but rather as one who had failed. Jesus knew that there was more to Peter than his failures.

But isn't it true that we often deal with our failures as if they told the whole story of our lives. How many times do we catch ourselves saying, "I'm nothing but a failure", when what we really mean is, "I have failed this time". Failures are never to be given the status of being so important that nothing else matters. If we allow failure to take over the most significant position in our minds and hearts, then we have made our failures into our gods. We then allow ourselves to be controlled by our failures. God's forgiveness and mercy can take care of our failures in the blink of an eye. And what is even more, our failures, far from dragging us down, can even help us to grow in humility and compassion.

The way in which each of us uses our failures is going to be different. We can give the gift of understanding to others because we understand certain types of failure, as it were, from the inside. Yes, we have been there. We have some idea of what others are going through, and because of that, we can

listen and support them in a unique way.

The following story appeared in last week's *Action 2000* daily devotional, which many of you have. It fits in very nicely with the above piece.

Katherine Gordy Levine is a professor at Columbia University. She and her husband have dealt with foster children all their lives. Her book *When Good Kids Do Bad Things* tells how a "good kid," the Dalai Lama, future Tibetan spiritual leader, did a "bad thing". He went into the palace garage, "borrowed" one of his country's four cars. And smashed it into a tree. Today's reading tells how another "good kid" did a "bad thing."

How do I react when a "good kid" does a "bad thing"? How do I decide how I should react in such a case?

Every parent is at some time the father of the unreturned prodigal, with nothing to do but keep his house open to hope.
John Ciardi

Catholic Appeal and FIOF Report

Our goal or assessment \$242,000.00

Pledges received to date \$273,000.00

The parish does get to keep the \$31,000 windfall and we are *not* assessed more next year because we went over this year. And we are not taxed on our "windfall" money. Each parish is assessed 15% of total offertory income from previous fiscal year.

Every pastor looks forward to a Catholic Appeal windfall to their budget. Not all receive it, but most do. I don't have words fancy enough to thank you for your generous response. I do hope that everyone who pledged did receive my personally signed 'thank you' letter.

We had 995 donors. Last year we had 1,114 donors. We had 29 new donors. The following is a breakdown of the levels of donation and the number of people who gave in each level.

\$2,100 & above:	7 families
\$2,000 & above:	7 families
\$1,500—\$1,999:	17 families
\$1,000—\$1,499:	31 families
\$ 500—\$ 999:	110 families
\$ 250—\$ 499:	176 families
\$ 100—\$ 249:	354 families
\$ 50—\$ 99:	134 families
Under \$50.00:	161 families

Have a blessed week,

