

### 3<sup>Rd</sup> Sunday Easter – “Do You Love Me, Peter?”

The disciples have been Jesus’ disciples for three years, have given their whole lives to him, have seen him crucified and risen from the dead and he had appeared to them twice after his resurrection—so what do they do not? What comes next? They have no idea. The only thing they can think of is to go back to their old life as if nothing had happened to interrupt it! Well, I guess we go back fishing now,” says Peter. It’s almost hilariously funny. I think Jesus must have infinite patience and a great sense of humor to put up with us.

Notice that the Apostles, Jesus’ best friends, didn’t know it was him at first—and then they did. The same thing happened in every other post-Resurrection appearance. Mary Magdalene mistakes him for the gardener, the apostles in the upper room mistake him for a ghost until he eats some fish, the two disciples on the road to Emmaus don’t recognize him even as their hearts are burning as he explains all the messianic passages in the Scriptures to them on the road. Here, the Apostles don’t recognize him on the beach, but only when they see the miracle of 153 fish who swim right into their net.

And then Jesus serves them a meal of fish and bread to his Apostles. This must have reminded them of the two times they had seen him feed thousands of people by multiplying bread and fish. If he could feed five thousand disciples with two fish, he could certainly feed seven with 153.

And finally, Peter denied Jesus three times, Jesus gives Peter a second chance three times by asking him the same question three times: “Do you love me?” Peter is hurt and upset at Jesus’ third question not because he made Jesus ask the same question three times but because Jesus changed the word for “love” in his third question. Twice he asked Peter whether he had *agape*, and Peter replied that he had only *philia*; and now Jesus comes down to Peter’s level and replied that he had only *philia*; and now Jesus comes down to Peter’s level and asks whether he has at least *philia*. Peter was upset because his lack of *agape* had made Jesus come down to his level. And even on that level, Jesus had to question even Peter’s *philia*, Peter’s friendship, Peter’s natural love.