

Sunday, May 1, 2022 – Third Sunday of Easter

First Reading: Acts 9:1-20

The story of the conversion of Saul on the Road to Damascus is so central to the book of Acts that it is told three times – in Acts 9, when it happened, and two more times in Acts 22 and 26.

1-2 - Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any who belonged to the Way, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

3-6 - Now as he was approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" He asked, "Who are you, Lord?" The reply came, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But get up and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do."

8-9 - Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing. For three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

11-14 - The Lord said to Ananias, "Go and look for a man of Tarsus named Saul. At this moment he is praying, and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight." But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints in Jerusalem; and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who invoke your name."

15-19 - But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before Gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel; I myself will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name." So Ananias went and entered the house. He laid his hands on Saul and said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on your way here, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and his sight was restored. Then he got up and was baptized, and after taking some food, he regained his strength.

19-20 - For several days he was with the disciples in Damascus, and immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God."

How – under what circumstances - did you first meet Jesus? What was it like?

Did you have – or do you know someone who had – a Damascus Road experience?

Have you ever been in the position of realizing that everything you were doing – and the direction in which you were going – were all wrong? If so, what was it like?

Re Ananias' saying, "Brother Saul" – what were the most difficult words that you had to say?

Re Saul after meeting Jesus – he has the same personality – just a totally different allegiance, purpose, and direction

Gospel: John 21:1-19

1-3 - Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias. 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. 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.

Here we have seven of the eleven living disciples with Peter taking the leadership role.

The verb tense, "I am going fishing," is not, "I am going to go fishing once," but, "I am going to go back to fishing."

Mark 1: 17 - The disciples respond to the original call to follow Jesus.

John 2: 11 - The disciples come to faith in Jesus.

Matthew 6: 26-33 - The disciples learn more of that it means to be a follower of Jesus.

Luke 5: 11 - After a frustrating night and a miraculous catch, Peter leaves all to follow Jesus. But here he again goes back to fishing, and what is the result? "That night they catch nothing."

How do you relate to these various stages in Peter's relationship with Jesus?

Have you ever gone back to the old ways and experienced the equivalent of, "That night they caught nothing"?

4-6 - Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, "Children, you have no fish, have you?" They answered him, "No." 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.

9-12 - When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it and bread. Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you have just caught." 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. Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast."

Jesus was concerned not just to encourage and feed some very frustrated and hungry fishermen. He also knew that there were some real issues that Peter needed to face – the fact that he had denied his Lord.

How much do you think Peter must have dreaded the time that he would have to talk with Jesus about what he had done?

What are the issues in your life that you need to face and talk about with Jesus?

Is there something in your life that makes you dread the conversation that you need to have with Jesus?

Peter had denied Jesus three times, so Jesus asks Peter "Do you love me?" three times.

But notice that each time Jesus' question is different.

And Peter does not use the same word for love that Jesus uses – agapao vs. phileo

15 - "Simon son of John, do you love (agapao) me more than these?"

Mark 14: 29 - "Even though all become deserters, I will not."

"Yes, Lord; you know that I love (phileo) you."

16 - "Simon son of John, do you love (agapao) me?"

"Yes, Lord; you know that I love (phileo) you."

17 - "Simon son of John, do you love (phileo) me?"

17 - 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."

When has God's Word been especially painful and hurtful for you?

How do you feel about the statement that some make that no verse in the Bible should ever be hurtful, and if it is, it is being mis-interpreted and/or used wrongly?