THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER, YEAR C

By Rev. Moses Iyogwoya

JESUS APPEARED TO THE APOSTLES THE THIRD TIME

The Apostles led by Peter seemed to have forgotten the task that was ahead of them, it is possible they were having their doubts about the mission Jesus entrusted to them when he rose from the dead, they attempted to return to their fishing profession. The interrogation of Peter by Jesus, and Jesus' triple instruction to Peter to "feed my sheep" offered fresh hope and direction for their apostolic ministry. From there Peter would choose and remain focus on the way of Christ. The same people who were afraid and so unsure about Jesus to the extent of returning to fishing have become so bold in the Acts of the Apostles that they were determined to look and confront the Jewish authorities over their persecution and of killing Jesus. The same persons who sought security in fishing were now rejoicing for the privilege of suffering dishonor for Jesus.

The first reading presents us with the Apostles before the elders, the Sanhedrin. Their encounter with the Jews leaders showed the new era of obedience. At first, they would give in to their fear of the leaders and desire for self-preservation. But then they had come to know through their experiences with the risen Lord that it was only the way of Christ that could offer everybody freedom from the clutches of sin, hopelessness, fruitlessness, timidity, disobedience, darkness and betrayal. Therefore, they witnessed to Christ boldly and openly.

When they were warned not to speak any more about the name of Jesus, they were bold enough to respond, "We must obey God rather than men". This must be the same stance for us today. We must refuse to be silenced by the earthly powers whose values are contrary to those proclaimed in the Scripture and the Church. The Apostles "left the presence of the Council rejoicing…" They were not going to relent or be quieted by opposition even from the most powerful wicked leaders. They happily bore the sufferings that came through their witnessing to the faith. This happened because they had the confidence that the Risen Lord was with them.

The second reading gives us a scene in Heaven how due honor is given to the Lamb who was slain. He was worshipped by those in the heavenly Court. We can recall Philippians.2:9-10 how Paul tells us that because Jesus submitted in humility he was given a name that is above all other names, that at the mention of his name every

knee shall bow in heaven, on earth and under the earth. The sacrifice of the Lamb has given a transformation of our heart, redemption has finally come to us through Jesus, therefor we can cry “Amen” and fall down and worship like the elders.

Jesus was possibly disappointed seeing his disciples back to their former trade that night. Jesus feels the same when we begin to delve into things not glorifying God. But he never gave up on them, he sought them out and at his direction they made a tremendous catch of fish beyond their imagination. No matter what, Jesus does not give up on us. The Church is presently at crossroads with moral problems especially those bordering on procreation and same sex union. Highly placed Churchmen and many Catholics have been indicted. There is great need for the Church to seek the face of the Risen Lord, the One to whom belongs “power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing”.

Our world has suffered massively from the consequences of disobedience and false obedience. At baptism, we hear “I do,” at marriages, we hear “I do,” at the reception of the sacrament of Holy Order, we hear “I am”. These are pledges of obedience we made and intend to fulfill. But we see how much we have failed, acted worse and not knowing how to love. We have lied to our husband, our wife, our children and have broken our vows. Workers conspire against their boss, the boss against his or her employees. What a world of hate, war and unfaithfulness, all because we do not know the cost of true love. Peter initially denied Christ three times and three times Christ asked Peter if he loves him. He is asking us today if we love him, because he wants to forgive us for the many times, we have been disobedient and failed to love.

Our liturgical celebrations, especially the Mass, must enable us to encounter the Risen Lord. We must not give in to the devil, we must never give up amid evil in our world, we must keep on fighting for the reign of God in our world. We must progress in love even when the future looks bleak. There is a Latin proverb that says, “Not to progress is to go back”. We must never give up.

Here is an example of someone who did not give up. This young man was just seven years old when his family was forced out of their home on a legal technicality, and he had to work to help support them. At age nine, his mother died. At twenty-two, he lost his job as a store clerk. He wanted to go to the law school, but his education wasn't good enough. At twenty-three, he went into debt to become a partner in a

small store. At twenty-six, his business partner died, leaving him a huge debt that took years to repay. At twenty-eight, after courting a girl for four years, he asked her to marry him. She said "no'. At thirty-seven, on his third try, he was elected to the Congress, but two years later, he failed to be reelected. At forty-one, his four-year-old son died. At forty-five, he ran for the Senate and lost. At forty-seven, he failed as the vice-presidential candidate. At forty-nine, he ran for the Senate again and lost. At fifty-one, he was elected president of the United States. His name was Abraham Lincoln, failures never seemed to have discouraged Lincoln. We should never give up; love of God demands letting God be in control of our very lives. Let us enter a new relationship with God today.