

Weekly Reflection

Reverend Steven M. Pautler



Sunday, May 4, 2025 | Third Sunday of Easter | Gone Fishing... With Jesus!

"Cast the net over the right side of the boat and you will find something." – John 21:6

There's a man in a certain parish—let's call him Gary—who proudly claims to be the best fisherman in southern Illinois. Every time he shows up at church, he's got a new picture of himself holding up a fish so big you'd think he dragged it straight out of Kentucky Lake with his bare hands. One day, Gary invited his pastor to go fishing with him. The priest figured, "Why not? A little fresh air, some peace and quiet, and a good chance for a priestly retreat on the water."

So off they went. They got up before sunrise, packed the gear, and drove to what Gary called his "secret spot." Now, this wasn't just any spot. This place was so off-the-grid that the GPS gave up halfway there and politely asked if they were sure they wanted to continue. They hiked through woods, crossed a ditch, ducked under a barbed wire fence (Gary insisted it was just "decorative"), and finally arrived at a tiny clearing by the water that looked like it had never seen a lawn mower—or a priest—before.

After three hours on the water, the pastor had caught... absolutely nothing. Meanwhile, Gary reeled in four bass, three bluegill, and even a turtle that looked so old it probably remembered when the lake was just a puddle. Finally, the pastor turned to Gary and asked, "What's your secret?" Gary leaned back in his chair, tipped his sunglasses down just enough to look over the top, and said, **"Father, it's all about where you cast your line."** The pastor laughed and said, "You know, that sounds oddly familiar."

Because in this weekend's Gospel from John 21:1–19, we meet another group of fishermen—Peter and the disciples—who also spent the night casting lines and nets with nothing to show for it. **Not a single fish.** The lake was as empty as the donut box after Sunday Mass. Then, just after daybreak, someone on the shore (spoiler alert: it's Jesus, risen from the dead) calls out, **"Cast your net on the right side of the boat."** And just like that, the net is overflowing. So many fish they can't even haul it in. It turns out Gary and Jesus were sharing the same fishing advice: **It's all about where you cast your line.**

But more than that, the story reveals this truth—when we rely only on ourselves, our nets often come up empty. But when we listen to Jesus, when we trust in His voice and direction—even when it doesn't make sense—blessings follow. That's the lesson of Easter. Christ is risen, and He's not distant. He's still calling out to us from the shore, guiding us to a better way, to deeper trust, and to a fuller life. He's reminding us: "You're not alone out there. I'm with you. Just cast differently—cast in faith." So, the next time you're feeling discouraged, frustrated, or like your spiritual "net" is empty, remember Gary's advice... and Jesus'. The right cast—done with faith—can make all the difference. And hey, if the fish don't bite, maybe Jesus is just waiting to surprise you on shore—with breakfast!

Sunday Homily

Reverend Steven M. Pautler



Third Sunday of Easter, May 4, 2025 – Cycle C

Acts 5:27–32, 40b–41; Psalm 30:2, 4, 5–6, 11–12, 13; Revelation 5:11–14; John 21:1–19

Theme: “It’s All About Where You Cast Your Line

Now, I want to start with a story. And before anyone comes up to me after Mass trying to guess who it is—I’ll be honest: I made it up. It’s a good old-fashioned Southern Illinois fish story. Like most fish stories, it’s got a few whoppers, a lot of heart, and just enough truth to keep it believable. Let’s say there’s a man named Gary—he proudly claims to be the best fisherman in all of Southern Illinois. Every time he shows up at church, he’s got a photo of himself holding up a fish so massive you’d think he wrestled it out of Kentucky Lake with one hand and held a Snickers bar in the other. One day, Gary invites his pastor (who bears a suspicious resemblance to yours truly) to go fishing. I think, “Sure! A peaceful morning on the water sounds like the perfect little retreat with the Lord.”

Well, this wasn’t exactly a retreat—it was more like an expedition. The GPS gave up halfway there and just said, “Good luck.” We crossed a ditch, hiked through thorny woods, ducked under a barbed wire fence (Gary said it was “decorative”), and finally ended up at this hidden little patch of water where even the fish seemed surprised to see humans. After three hours on the water, I had caught... nothing. Not a nibble. Meanwhile, Gary reeled in four bass, three bluegill, and a turtle that looked like it remembered when the Mississippi was a creek. Finally, I turned to him and said, “Alright, Gary, what’s the secret?” He leaned back in his lawn chair, tipped his sunglasses down just a bit, and said, “**Father, it’s all about where you cast your line.**” Now, that may have been the punchline of my fictional fish story—but **it’s also the exact point of today’s Gospel from John 21.**

The disciples had been out all night fishing and had caught nothing. Then Jesus shows up—though they don’t yet recognize Him—and He tells them, “Cast your net on the right side of the boat.” They do... and suddenly, the net is overflowing with fish. It wasn’t that they didn’t know how to fish. They just weren’t casting where Jesus told them to. That’s the real message here. Not just about fishing—but about faith. About trusting the Lord’s direction, even when we’re tired, even when we’ve tried everything our own way.

And this Gospel is about something even deeper than nets and fish. It’s about restoration and mission. Peter, who had denied Jesus three times, is now given three opportunities to declare his love. And each time, Jesus responds with a commission: “**Feed my lambs. Tend my sheep. Feed my sheep.**” The Resurrection of Jesus isn’t the end—it’s the beginning of something new. It’s not just proof of victory over death—it’s a personal call to service, to discipleship, to love in action.

We see that same fearless love in our first reading from Acts. The apostles are flogged for preaching in Jesus’ name, and instead of hiding or complaining, what do they do? They rejoice—because they were found worthy to suffer for Him. And in Revelation, we’re given a vision of heaven, where all creation proclaims: “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain.” This is what it’s all about—worship, trust, and total surrender to the One who gave everything for us. So, if you’re feeling like your spiritual net is empty—like you’ve been casting out prayers or efforts or good intentions and coming up with nothing—listen again for the voice of Jesus. He’s standing on the shore of your life, saying, “Try the other side. I’m not done with you.”

And hey—if all else fails, and the fish still won’t bite, don’t worry... Sometimes the best catch of the day is waiting at the Altar—or maybe, just maybe, in a basket of Snickers by the steps after Mass.