

by Therese Sherlock, CSJ

Open a bible at the center of your group. Pray the lines below from Psalm 136, a litany of thanksgiving for all God has done for Israel. Repeat *ALL* after each *LEADER* statement.

**LEADER:** Give thanks to the God of gods.

**ALL:** God's steadfast love endures forever.

**LEADER:** Who alone does great wonders.

- Who spread the earth upon the waters.
- Who made the great lights—the sun to rule over the day, the moon and stars to rule over the night.
- Who freed Israel from oppression.
- Who divided the sea and brought Israel through its midst.
- Who gave the people a new land.
- Who remembers us in our lowliness.
- Who rescues us from our foes.
- Who gives food to all.
- Give thanks to the God who gives life.

A hurt sticks in one's memory, especially one that seemed like a betrayal. When we were in junior high, my best friend, Margie, and I were picked to sing on a Saturday morning

# SUNDAY

## by SUNDAY



radio program in Cedar Rapids. It was a strong station whose signal went all over eastern Iowa. We planned to sing a duet version of "April Showers."

Cedar Rapids was an hour-and-a-half drive from our small town. The morning program was on at 10:30 a.m. My mom volunteered to drive us. That morning I was getting dressed early when the phone rang. I answered. It was Margie's mother. Margie was sick and couldn't come.

"What's wrong with her?" I asked.

"She has cramps," her mother said.

I was crushed. Cramps were the excuse girls gave when they didn't want to do something. It could not be questioned. Cramps just were.

After I cried and cried, my mom and I drove to Cedar

Rapids. I sang "April Showers" alone. My brother taped the program for me, but I never listened to it. Margie's betrayal sat in my heart like a big lump for a long time.

After high school I went to college and after one year joined the Sisters of St. Joseph. Margie went to work in Denver and soon married. We kept in touch but rarely met. Gradually the lump went away.

Today Margie and her husband are both ill and living in Arizona.

I am the one that has to make the move to visit and write and call. In a way I am the only connection Margie has from back then. When I visit, we greet each other like the old friends we are.

In this Sunday's gospel Jesus and Peter talk for the first time after Peter denied even knowing Jesus in the high priest's courtyard. His denial is much bigger than backing out of a duet on the radio. Peter didn't stand with his friend. What will the two say to each other?

● When have you let go of a hurt and welcomed back into your life a friend or family member?

# GOSPEL

## Jesus' friends make a great catch.

**NARRATOR:** At the Sea of Tiberias Jesus showed himself to the disciples once again. Simon Peter, Thomas (the Twin), Nathanael (from Cana in Galilee), Zebedee's sons, and two other disciples were there.

**SIMON PETER:** I'm going fishing

**ALL:** We'll join you.

**NARRATOR:** They went off to get into their boat. All through the night they caught nothing. Just after daybreak Jesus was standing on the shore, though none of the disciples knew it was Jesus.

**JESUS:** Children, have you not caught anything to eat?

**DISCIPLES:** Not a thing.

**JESUS:** Cast your net off to the starboard side, and you will find something.

**NARRATOR:** So they made a cast and took so many fish they could not haul the net in. Then the disciple Jesus loved cried out.

**BELOVED DISCIPLE:** Peter, it is the Lord!

**NARRATOR:** On hearing it was the Lord, Simon Peter threw on some clothes—he was stripped—and jumped into the water. Meanwhile the other disciples came in the boat, towing the net full of fish. Actually they were not far from land—no more than a hundred

yards. When they landed, they saw a charcoal fire there with a fish laid on it and some bread.

**JESUS:** Bring some of the fish you just caught.

**NARRATOR:** Simon Peter went aboard and hauled ashore the net loaded with sizable fish—153 of them! In spite of the great number, the net was not torn.

**JESUS:** Come and eat your meal.

**NARRATOR:** Not one of the disciples presumed to inquire, "Who are you?" for they knew it was the Lord. Jesus came over, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. This marked the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after being raised from the dead. When they had eaten their meal, Jesus said to Simon Peter:

**JESUS:** Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?

**PETER:** Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.



**JESUS:** Feed my lambs.

**NARRATOR:** A second time Jesus put his question.

**JESUS:** Simon, son of John, do you love me?

**PETER:** Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.

**JESUS:** Tend my sheep.

**NARRATOR:** A third time Jesus asked him:

**JESUS:** Simon, son of John, do you love me?

**NARRATOR:** Peter was hurt because Jesus had asked a third time, "Do you love me?" So he said to him:

**PETER:** Lord, you know everything. You know well that I love you.

**JESUS:** Feed my sheep. I tell you solemnly: as a young man you fastened your belt and went about as you

pleased; but when you are older you will stretch out your hands, and another will tie you fast and carry you off against your will.

**NARRATOR:** What he said indicated the sort of death by which Peter was to glorify God. Then he said to him—

**JESUS:** Follow me.

John 21.1-19

## Jesus and Peter reconcile.

The conversation between Jesus and Peter in Sunday's gospel happens after Jesus' resurrection. Peter has returned to the Sea of Tiberias (Lake Galilee) where his whole involvement with Jesus began. Peter has failed in his faith in Jesus prior to going fishing. At the high priest's

house during Jesus' trial, Peter denied even knowing Jesus. At the empty tomb to which he and the beloved disciple ran when Mary Magdalene brought them the Easter morning news, the beloved disciple saw the empty tomb and believed, but Peter simply returned home. His sentiments go unrecorded.

When Jesus appears on Easter evening and again a week later, John's gospel describes Thomas's doubt and subsequent faith but does not mention Peter's presence, though in all likelihood he was there. Many scripture scholars believe this last chapter of John's gospel, today's reading, was added to

provide an appearance of the risen Jesus to Peter and to give Peter another chance to profess his faith and love.

● **What does the big catch symbolize?**

● **How do the disciples recognize the risen Lord? How do we?**

● **With whom do you need to have a reconciling conversation?**

**A**fter the big catch and the subsequent breakfast, the risen Jesus takes Peter aside to untangle their relationship. Maybe they stroll along the lake together.

Jesus begins their conversation by asking Peter if he loves him more than the other disciples. Peter must remember that he boasted he would die with Jesus, only to run away at his arrest. He humbly says, “Lord, you know that I love you.” Jesus says, “Feed my lambs.” Twice more this exchange takes place. Repetition is an ancient way of stressing the solemnity and seriousness of an occasion.

The three repetitions also remind us of the three times Peter denied Jesus in the courtyard of the high priest. In that scene Peter, afraid for his life, rejected any connection with Jesus. Here by the lake, Jesus asks him to affirm that they still stand together in love and mission.

As a response to Peter’s threefold protestations of his love, Jesus gives him three commands. People who train lectors teach them to stress the verbs in the passages they read aloud for the congregation. The verbs in Jesus’ three commands to Peter are key:

*Feed my lambs.*

*Tend my sheep.*

*Feed my sheep.*

This pastoral work will season Peter. He will show his love by nourishing and caring for Jesus’ followers, by feeding and tending them, by taking responsibility for the well-being of the community.

The middle word in these same three commands is the same—*my*. *My lambs. My sheep.* The flock does not belong to Peter; the community of followers belongs to Jesus. He is the master shepherd.

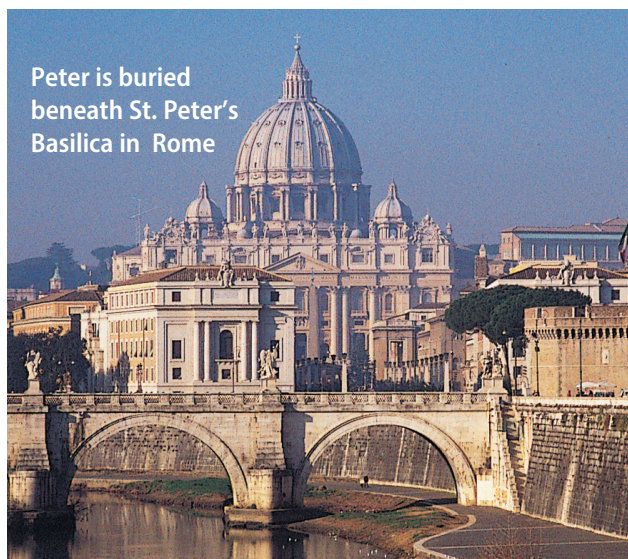
Peter receives a responsibility but not a superior role. His duty is to keep the sheep in the love that Jesus taught them, the love Jesus demonstrated in laying down his life for the flock. Peter is to feed, tend, and love the community, not lord it over the flock.

● **What needs does a community of believers have?**

● **How have church pastors tended and nourished you?**

**J**esus’ last words to Peter and his last words in John’s entire gospel are “Follow me.” The risen Jesus isn’t someone we can still follow physically the way Peter and the others did during his public life. The only way Peter can follow the risen Jesus is to follow his way of love, particularly for the flock Jesus has gathered and for the flocks that will gather in the future in his name.

In “Fiddler on the Roof” Tevye is so taken with his daughter wanting to marry for



Peter is buried beneath St. Peter's Basilica in Rome

love, that he decides to ask his wife, Golde, if she loves him. “Do you love me?” he sings. Golde answers, “Do I love you? For 26 years I’ve washed your clothes, made your meals, borne your children. If that isn’t love, what is?”

By the time John’s gospel is written, Peter has been dead for 40 or 50 years. He was crucified in Rome about A.D. 64. Readers of the gospel know Peter laid down his life for the flock as Jesus did. They know that he lived out his answer to the question “Do you love me?” in as many ways as Golde did.

The early Church remembers Peter as one who recognized that Gentiles as well as Jews belonged to Jesus’ flock. The Church remembers him as a preacher of the good news of Jesus. In its final verses the fourth gospel holds up the story of Peter’s conversion and reconciliation with Jesus as a testimony to what a faithful shepherd is.

● **Who shepherds your Christian community?**

● **How is their love like the love Jesus shows for his own?**



## Jesus' followers face persecution.

**T**he Acts of the Apostles, the sequel to Luke's gospel, describes the life of the Church as it developed after Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension. In Sunday's first reading from Acts some members of the Sanhedrin, the religious governing assembly of the time, are persecuting Jesus' followers, who will not be silenced.

The Sadducees take violent action against the disciples, arrest them, and throw them in jail (Acts 5.17), but a Pharisee named Gamaliel defends Jesus' followers, saying, "If this undertaking is of human origin, it will fail; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them; you may even be found fighting against God." Sunday's reading omits Gamaliel's speech (5.34-39).

The Second Vatican Council cautions us not to blame all Jews or Jews today for Jesus' death. Many Jews became Jesus' followers. Both Judaism and Christianity descend from Israel's ancient religion, which ends with the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70.

In Acts Luke portrays Peter as fearless in his zeal to preach the gospel. When the high priest questions him about his activities and warns him to stop talking about Jesus, Peter boldly states: "We must obey God, not humans!" He and the rest of the apostles refuse to be silenced. This Peter is a very different man

from the one who denied Jesus. Peter and the apostles have begun their mission to be fishers of people, to gather in believers from all parts of the world.

## Peter gives witness.

**The high priest began the interrogation of the apostles in this way: "We gave you strict orders not to teach about that name, yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us responsible for that man's blood."**

**To this, Peter and the apostles replied: "Better for us to obey God than human beings. The God of our ancestors has raised up Jesus, whom you put to death, 'hanging him on a tree.' He whom God has exalted at his right hand as ruler and savior is to bring repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. We testify to this. So, too, does the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those that obey him."**

**The Sanhedrin ordered the apostles not to speak again about the name of Jesus, and afterward dismissed them. The apostles for their part left the Sanhedrin full of joy that they had been judged worthy of ill treatment for the sake of the Name.**

Acts 5.27-32,40-41

● **About what can you not be silent? How is it rooted in who Jesus is?**

## PRAY

Prepare to name ways God is real to you in the wonder of everyday life. Think about the ways creation, Jesus, or the Spirit reveal God's self to you.

**LEADER:** Life-giving God, we know you in raising Jesus from the dead.

**ALL:** We are witnesses of these things.

**LEADER:** We know you, God, in the birth of our children.

**ALL:** We are witnesses of these things.

**LEADER:** I see God's heart in people's care for the poor and work for justice.

**ALL:** We are witnesses of these things.

**LEADER:** I see you in the tulips when they come up in the spring.

**ALL:** We are witnesses of these things.

*Add your own ways God is real.*



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## DO SOMETHING



● Visit your closest homeless shelter or food pantry to learn about volunteer opportunities. If you have children or grandchildren or younger brothers and sisters, take them with you. Children learn the work of charity and justice by doing it with family members.