

Homily: 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Easter: Cycle C: 2022: Acts 5:27-32, 40b-41; Ps 30; Rev 5:11-14; Jn 21:1-19

***Responding to the Lord in Faith with our human frailty***

One of the famous passages in the letters of St. Paul is when St. Paul is complaining about his human weakness to the Lord and asking Him to take it away, and the Lord's response is not what we expect, He says to St. Paul, "***My grace is enough for you, for in weakness power reaches perfection.***" And so from that revelation St. Paul goes on to say, *and so I willingly boast of my weaknesses instead that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I am content with weakness, with mistreatment, with distress, with persecutions and difficulties for the sake of Christ; for when I am powerless, it is then that I am strong* (from **2 Corinthians 12:9-10**). I bring this up because it is important to keep this in mind when we ponder today how Jesus dealt with Peter after the Resurrection when the Lord gave Peter a new start in light of his 3 denials.

1. **One of the biggest battles in the spiritual life is how to deal with our sins and weaknesses of character.** As I said last weekend, the Lord can't really help us if we refuse to acknowledge that we are sinners who struggle with various sins, problems, and weaknesses; and it is only in trusting in Jesus that we can be transformed in holiness over time. Peter was not a saint when he denied he knew Jesus 3 times. His pride and self-will were too great at that point, and so he fell into the very spiritual trap that Jesus told him he was going to while at the Last Supper. Amazing how that works. All of us feel overwhelmed at times whatever our vocation in life is, be it in our home life or work life or in social settings. Demands are made on us that sometimes in all honesty we can't fulfill properly; and yet in our pride we sometimes promises things we know we can't really do right now. So many times in our life as humans are things and demands thrust upon us from the outside, and if we don't rely on God more and more, we tend to come up short in our response. Those of you who are in the vocation of marriage know all the stresses that come with it. Over time living with another person, your spouse, is not always easy even if you are compatible; and then if God blesses you with children that just adds to that challenge, as well as the beauty of those relationships and responsibilities. And some days, you just do the best you can, hopefully relying more and more on the Lord in prayer and asking for the necessary graces to grow in holiness; and

trying not to get discouraged when you fail sometimes to do what you intend to do. Sometimes it's our fault, but sometimes it is out of our control. I deal with that all the time as a Pastor. I intend to call or visit someone and then a bunch of unexpected things are thrust upon me that I'm not able to do it that day or sometimes even for a while, but the key is don't give up; eventually get to that good thing you are intending to do with the Lord's help. *Remember the Lord's grace and power is made perfect in our weakness.*

2. **When we fall like St. Peter did; it should rightly humble us and hopefully change us long term.** When we fail at something one day, one week, or one year, or sometimes for decades, maybe even our whole life, as long as we regularly turn to the Lord and ask him for forgiveness - if need be - and to strengthen us, He will in ways often we don't even see and won't know until we get into eternity. That's where the daily act of contrition and many acts of Faith, Hope and Love, and the regular reception of the Sacrament of Confession are so helpful. As I've said before, sometimes God lets us struggle with one thing, so we don't fall into something worse. Obviously God wants to get us out of any mortal sins, as He doesn't want us to lose our souls forever, but He does allow us to struggle sometimes with defects of character to teach us to rely on Him more over time.
3. **But sometimes a miraculous transformation happens in a person.** That is where the importance of that **2<sup>nd</sup> conversion** comes in. Peter was changed after the Holy Spirit came on Pentecost. No longer was he a coward, but now He boldly proclaimed the truth of Jesus's Resurrection and the saving truth of the Catholic faith. It's amazing to read Peter's two letters in the NT which were written years after Jesus has ascended back to the right hand of the Father in Heaven. Peter is a completely changed man from the guy who denied Jesus 3 times. You can sense the peace and the confidence he now has in God rather than himself. **That's what the Lord wants for all of us.** When we are discouraged by our weaknesses, and the imperfections of others and life in this world, let's turn to the Lord and ask for His help and for the special intercession of Our Lady and St. Joseph and our favorite saints. We will make progress in holiness over time, but we have to be humble and realistic in knowing that it takes time for us to grow, as well as for the people we care about and desiring the salvation of others in the Lord. St. Peter and St. Paul pray for us; make us realize God can change us just like He did both of you. God bless you.