

## Readings for Petertide 29<sup>th</sup> June

### **The Prayer for Today**

**Almighty God,  
who by your Son Jesus Christ  
gave your apostle Peter many excellent gifts,  
and commanded him earnestly to feed your  
flock:  
enable, we pray, all bishops and pastors  
diligently to preach your holy word,  
and your people faithfully to follow it,  
that they may receive the crown of  
everlasting life;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

### **Acts 9.32-43**

Now as Peter went here and there among all the believers, he came down also to the saints living in Lydda. There he found a man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden for eight years, for he was paralyzed. Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you; get up and make your bed!" And immediately he got up. And all the residents of Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord.

Now in Joppa there was a disciple whose name was Tabitha, which in Greek is Dorcas. She was devoted to good works and acts of charity. At that time she became ill and died. When they had washed her, they laid her in a room upstairs. Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, who heard that Peter was there, sent two men to him with the request, "Please come to us without delay." So Peter got up and went with them; and when he arrived, they took him to the room upstairs. All the widows stood beside him, weeping and showing tunics and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was with them. Peter put all of them outside, and then he knelt down and prayed. He turned to the body and said, "Tabitha, get up." Then she opened her eyes, and seeing Peter, she sat up. He gave her his hand and helped her up. Then calling the saints and widows, he showed her to be alive. This became known throughout Joppa, and many believed in the Lord. Meanwhile he stayed in Joppa for some time with a certain Simon, a tanner.

Hear the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

## **Psalm 34.1-10**

I will bless the Lord continually:  
his praise shall be always in my mouth.

**Let my soul boast of the Lord:  
the humble shall hear it and rejoice.**

O praise the Lord with me: let us exalt his name  
together.

**For I sought the Lord's help and he  
answered:**

**and he freed me from all my fears.**

Look towards him and be bright with joy:  
your faces shall not be ashamed.

**Here is a wretch who cried, and the Lord  
heard me:**

**and saved me from all my troubles.**

The angel of the Lord encamps round those who fear  
him:

and delivers them in their need.

**O taste and see that the Lord is good:  
happy are they that hide in him!**

Fear the Lord, all you his holy ones:  
for those who fear him never lack.

**Lions may suffer want and go hungry:  
but those who seek the Lord lack nothing  
good.**

## **John 21:15-22**

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my lambs." A second time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Tend my sheep." He said to him the third time, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" 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. Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go." (He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, "Follow me."

Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them; he was the one who had reclined next to Jesus at the supper and had said, "Lord, who is it that is going to betray you?" When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, "Lord, what about him?" Jesus said to him, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? Follow me!"

Readings Year B Petertide

## Sermon

**The Gospel reading is a story of hope; a story of forgiveness and of reconciliation; a story of renewed friendship and a second chance.**

This story comes after the resurrection of Jesus.

We remember how when Jesus was betrayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, Peter, impetuously tries to defend Jesus with a sword, and then when Jesus is taken prisoner, when all the other disciples have fled, Peter follows at distance right into the courtyard of the High Priest's home.

It is there, in that courtyard as Peter tries to keep warm by a fire that he is accused of knowing Jesus. Three times Peter vigorously denies any knowledge of Jesus. But then the cock crows, Jesus turns and looks at Peter, and Peter filled with remorse for what he has done slips away and weeps.

Jesus is tried; tortured and crucified. He is buried in the grave belonging to Joseph of Arimathea. Then on the Third Day God raises Jesus from death; the grave is empty and the women visiting the tomb are instructed by the risen Lord to go and tell the disciples, including Peter, that God has raised Jesus from death.

It is a week later that Peter having gone fishing on the lake of Galilee with a group of disciples sees Jesus on the side of the lake preparing breakfast for them. Peter is eager to see Jesus again, but then after breakfast Jesus takes Peter to one side and asks him these three times "Do you love me?"

This morning just two thoughts about this:

- ❖ Jesus cares enough to forgive
- ❖ Jesus cares enough to rebuild trust.

### **Jesus cares enough to forgive**

Can you imagine how Jesus must have felt when Peter denied him? Just as that very time when Jesus most wanted people to stand by him, his most perceptive and trusted disciple lets him down.

All of us have been let down by people we trust. Haven't we? It might be family or friends; it might have been because of what they said or didn't say; it might have been that we expected better of them and they didn't shape up. It's painful when we are let down by those we trust, isn't it? Often it's hard to forgive in those circumstances. We probably all know of families torn apart by such things – perhaps in our own family there is unresolved bitterness.

Jesus cares enough to forgive. It can't have been easy for Jesus to do that; it can't have been easy for Peter to be taken aside by Jesus and asked that question. It seems as if for each time Peter denied Jesus, Jesus asks him the question "Do you love me?" The Gospel says that Peter felt hurt because Jesus asked him that question three times.

But between Peter denying Jesus in the High Priest's home and Jesus talking to Peter by the lakeside, something very important had happened. Jesus had died on the cross and by his death he opened the way for forgiveness and hope to all who deny him.

We too are just like Peter. We too deny Jesus. We deny him when we no longer treat him as our friend, when we forget to talk to him or when we allow others to talk about him in a bad way. We deny Jesus when we allow trivial things to interfere with our following him or when we realize that our love has grown cold. Jesus cared enough about Peter to forgive him. Jesus cares enough about us to forgive us.

### **Peter cared enough to rebuild trust.**

Sometimes we have to take drastic and brave action to save a situation. We know the phrase about being “cruel to be kind”.

You may remember the story of Aron Ralston. In May 2003 he showed just how far people will go to survive. After being pinned by a massive boulder for five days in a remote canyon in Utah in the United States, Ralston did the unthinkable – he cut off his pinned arm with a pocket-knife, lowered himself down a rock wall and hiked until a search helicopter found him.

When his water ran out Ralston decided that the only way to save his life was to sacrifice his arm. He told rescuers that he realized that he would not survive unless he took drastic action. He told them that he used his pocket-knife to amputate his right arm below the elbow and then applied a tourniquet and administered first aid from a kit he had in his backpack.

In his first meeting with reporters, he frequently referred to power of prayer during the excruciating ordeal. He felt a

surge of energy on the National Day of Prayer: "The source of the power I felt was the thoughts and prayers of many people, most of whom I will never know."

His courage was extraordinary, and his will to survive truly inspiring. He demonstrated that if you have meaning and passion for living, you can endure any pain and beat all the odds.

Just like Jesus cared enough to forgive, so Peter cared enough to swallow his pride and effectively say “sorry”. He really wanted to keep the friendship. So Peter heard the questions Jesus asked and simply replied, “You know Lord that I love you.” In other words, “I know I let you down terribly, it’s hard for me to admit it to you, but I want the friendship to be restored.”

### **What about us?**

I believe that Jesus keeps on asking us “Do you love me?” “Do you really love me?” When we know that our love has grown cold, or we know that we have let our Lord down that can be a very painful question for us to answer because it demands a deep honesty. We have to admit our wrong and resolve to open our lives again to the unconditional love that Jesus has for us.

St Peter’s Day is an excellent time for us to listen again to Jesus’ question to us “Do you love me?” And then for us to reply from the bottom of our hearts “Lord you know everything; you know that I love you.”