

## *To love the God revealed in Jesus is to be empowered to love others too.*

They had their mouths full of fish, his fish. He had caught (or bought) it for them, he had fried it, and he had asked, "Do you like it?" They had answered yes, and they patted their filled stomachs.

They had their hands full of bread. He had baked (or bought) it for them. He had asked, "Do you like it?" They had looked at it, they had put it in their mouths, and while they were chewing it carefully to be sure of the taste, they had said yes.

Then he asked them that other question, that old, human, tricky, ambiguous, deceiving question, "Do you love me, Peter? Do you love me?" Peter said, "Yes, Sir, I love you." That is all he said, and the question Jesus asked had not been answered, at least not clearly. Peter might have meant, "I love you because I love to be with you, because I love to eat your fish, because I love your bread very much, because I love myself."

Jesus asked him a second time, "Do you love me?" Again, Peter did not really answer his question. Again he said, "Yes, I love you," without making it clear what he really meant. So Jesus asked him a third time, "Do you love me?" And when Peter again did not answer the question, Jesus answered it himself. He said, "If you really love me, if you really love my approach, if you

really love my style of life, if you really love my way, then be not interested in yourself but in others - feed, nourish, nurture my sheep."

We live in a society where we often blame one another. And it's always the same: "Everybody seems only to care for himself." How often we hear this. How often we say this. I do not think that is the true picture of this society. So many of us who get into trouble are surrounded by friends. Yet, we continue to blame one another for so much carelessness, selfishness, for so much lack of care, interest and love in all kinds of things: in education, medication, shops, transportation, counseling. So many of us say that we love Jesus. So many of us regularly come together to witness to this. So many of us come together to sing about it, and nevertheless...there remains that question, "Do you love me?"

Jesus still asks, "Do you love me?" He still says to those who claim to love him, "Feed my people." The Eucharist we celebrate today in the risen Christ is our way of pledging ourselves to engage in the apostolic mission entrusted to Peter and the others on the shore of Galilee. We have come here to be fed ourselves by the life-giving word and to be nourished by the holy bread and cup of the messianic meal. But what we will receive today is only a sip and a morsel. This Eucharist

is, as we know, a foretaste of the heavenly banquet yet to come. Meanwhile, the work of feeding God's people is to be taken up by us who eat and drink here.

Dare to pay attention this week to your contribution to the human reality of food shared and food withheld. Dare to listen to your own words, spoken or not, in the act of eating. "You are what you eat," said one of the early Greek Church writers, teaching people about the Eucharist with wisdom like that of Saint Augustine: "The mystery you say 'amen' to is your own mystery. So let your 'amen' be true. Those who are at the table become what's on the table." Nourished by the word of Scripture, we are called and empowered to embody that word, to become good news in a hungry and angry world. Fed by the body of Christ, we become the body of Christ and members of one another, extending our vision of a world redeemed, the kingdom come and God's reign achieved.

"Come and eat your meal." "Do you love me?" "Feed my people." So, let us pray: Three times you asked, and Peter was troubled by his accusing heart, "Do you love me?" Yes, Lord, I do, but like a mortal does. Let your love live in me! Amen.

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