

Rev. Branimir Jagodić

Homily at the Eucharistic Celebration

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Dear brothers and sisters, the Gospel we have just heard is one of the most tender and profound encounters between the Risen Jesus and one of His disciples. It takes place on the shore of the lake, after the breakfast. Everything seems almost ordinary, calm. Yet beneath the surface, something remains unresolved. Between Jesus and Peter stands the wound of betrayal.

Let us remember: only a few days earlier, Peter had denied Jesus three times. The one who had promised to follow Him even unto death, in a moment of fear chose safety and denied his friend. And now, we might expect Jesus to begin with precisely that question: "*Peter, why did you betray me?*" But Jesus does not come with reproach. He does not wish to return Peter to guilt, but to restore him to himself.

That is why He asks him three times: "*Simon, son of John, do you love me?*"

Three questions — as an answer to three denials. But notice something important: Jesus is not questioning Peter in order to shame him, but to heal him. Where Peter had once said "*no*" three times, he is now given the opportunity to say "*yes*" three times. It is as though Jesus is gently healing what had been broken.

And Peter's response is striking. There is no longer the same confidence or self-assurance. No more: "*Even if all fall away, I will not.*" Now he simply says, with humility: "*Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.*" It is as though Peter has finally learned an important lesson: faith does not rest upon our own strength, but upon trust in God, who knows us better than we know ourselves.

And it is precisely then — after Peter’s denial — that Jesus entrusts him with a mission: “*Feed my lambs. Tend my sheep.*” It seems almost paradoxical. We might think: first prove yourself, first show that you are faithful. But Jesus knows that people who have experienced their own weakness often become more capable of understanding the weakness of others. Peter is no longer the same man — now he knows what it means to fall, and what it means to be lifted up by mercy.

This Gospel therefore carries a great consolation for us as well. For all of us have our own moments of denial: moments when we were less than we wished to be, when we remained silent instead of speaking, chose ourselves instead of what was right, fear instead of faithfulness. And perhaps we think that such moments distance us from God. But the Risen Jesus reveals something different today: He comes not first with condemnation, but with a question that goes straight to the heart: “*Do you love me?*”

For in the end, perhaps the most important question of our lives will not be how successful, strong, or perfect we were, but whether we loved. Whether, despite our weaknesses, we remained turned toward Christ.

And when Peter answers, Jesus speaks two simple words to him: “Follow me.” It is as if He were saying: *Your story did not end with your failure. You can move forward. You can begin again.*

That is the hope of this Gospel: God does not give up on a person after failure. Where we see an ending, Christ so often sees a new beginning.