

# *Friday of the Seventh Week of Easter May 29th*

**READING: John 21:15-19**

‘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.’ 16 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.’

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## **REFLECTION**

It is a famous passage, and deeply evocative. Peter understandably a little hurt. Jesus asking Peter the same question three times, albeit with a little bit of verb substitution (about which commentators used to get very excited, but in more recent decades have noticed that it is a stylistic quirk of John to play with synonyms). Three questions echoing an earlier three denials by Peter, but on the other hand there’s a few threes in John’s gospel account (Nicodemus appears three times, the Wedding at

Cana was on the third day, Jesus promises to rebuild the temple in three days, this is the third time Jesus reveals his resurrected self ...). Some commentators, perhaps fresh from reading Matthew's gospel-account, find a commissioning of Peter as chief apostle, first pope, et cetera.

Sometimes a shovel is just a shovel, and the over-riding theme of this Jesus resurrection-scene is love. Not any particular verb or even noun for love, but love itself. While I suspect most of us fall short of the proof of the pudding, it is nevertheless in the eating as we strive to open ourselves up to the Spirit of Christ who enables us to be bearers of love. As we surrender to the Spirit of Love, so we may be bearers and practitioners of the kind of love that helps all our neighbours through the labyrinths of the lives that have befallen us.

With that in mind Jesus offers his last words to his followers: "follow me."