



BENEDICTINE SISTERS OF CHICAGO

3rd Sunday of Easter
May 4, 2025
Sr. Virginia Jung

Acts 5:27-32, 40b-41
Revelation 5: 11-14
John 21: 1-19

We are witnesses of these things. This is what Peter and the apostles, on trial before the Sanhedrin, say after being accused of not following orders to keep quiet about Jesus. *We are witnesses of these things.* Not only are they witnesses of the torture, execution, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, but they are also privy to its meaning – that they are saved; that it was a gift to all humankind. They are witnesses to the power of love that frees everyone to love, to forgive, to care for each other.

We also are witnesses of these things, as baptized individuals, as Church, as a monastic community. Here in the beauty of Easter, it is a good time to check in – how do I witness to these things – to forgiveness, to love, to caring for my neighbor? How do we do that as Church? How do we do that as Benedictine Sisters and Oblates?

This year, more than ever before, I am struck by the courage of the apostles. Each year, during this season, we are always treated to reading the Acts of the Apostles, but this year, as I worked on the daily reflections of April and May, their perseverance in the face of trials and persecution makes a deeper impression on me.

As I read and hear these stories of the apostles' witness to the saving love of Jesus, I realize that the same forces that threatened Jesus threatened them, and they continued the mission- cheerfully.

The reading from Revelation also speaks to witness. It presents John's mystic vision where the angels and all creation witness to the victory of the Lamb and the glory of God. I have to chuckle when I realize that this passage is the source of those complicated responses we sometimes use in intercessions – responses like – Worthy is the Lamb to receive power and riches, wisdom and strength, honor and glory, and you are struggling to remember which words to say in which order, listening to the other Sisters with both ears of the head to catch which word comes next.

Nevertheless, this needs to be our response each day, to fall down in awe with the elders before the glory of God. John tells us that the angels, living creatures, and elders were countless in number. My Bible notes say that to express infinity, he wrote that they were 100,000,000 + 1,000,000. And this hyperbole expresses the truth. Every day, creation gives glory to God, whether in sunsets, birdsong, the waves of the lake, storms, flowers blooming, squirrels running around... As part of that creation, we also are called to express our energy, our joy, our praise, and our thanksgiving, to live it out in love and care for each other and for all of creation. A commentator notes that in this passage, the ruling power of the universe is identified with self-sacrificing love. God calls us to witness to that love in our own lives.

Giving witness to the risen Christ is also a theme of this gospel passage which contains two stories. One tells of the disciples' surprise and delight at encountering the risen Christ on the lake shore and the other emphasizes Peter's 2nd chance to give witness to his love for Jesus Christ. Like the fisher folk's nets, this gospel is filled to overflowing with the glory of God; the abundance of fish, the joy of the disciples, and the hospitality of Jesus, all sing praise to God. This gospel is the one that I can most easily picture myself

*3rd Sunday of Easter
May 4, 2025
Sr. Virginia Jung*

in – whether it is at Lake Michigan or at a lake in the north woods, this scene and the actions and reactions of people feel like modern people; it all feels familiar and plausible to me. As Jesus shares the grilled bread and fish with the apostles, we remember the miracle of the loaves and fishes. This is a Eucharistic scene that is somehow very down to earth, friends sharing breakfast over a fire at the shore. We are called to reenact this event as we celebrate the Eucharist each Sunday at mass, witnessing to the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus. And we are called to witness it in so many ways in our interactions with each other each day.

When Peter jumps out of the boat, into the water, to get quickly to Jesus, it reminds us of the time he sank into the water because of his moment of fear when Jesus was walking on the water. But here, all fear is gone. He is greeting his risen Lord, and knowing that he is safe from terror, he is able to also witness to his love for Christ as he is asked three times if he loves Him. The conversation between Jesus and Peter reminds us that that we, too, are called to be loving, gentle, and committed to caring, whether we are the leaders or the followers. This gospel reminds us that this is our call as individuals, as Church, and as a Benedictine community. This scene is very moving as we mourn the passing of Pope Francis and await the election of his successor. We hope for a good shepherd and we pray for the new Pope's well-being in a demanding position in the Church. At the time this gospel was written, the author knew that Peter had died a martyr. It holds him up as a model for each of us and reassures us that we do not need to be perfect but we do need to accept the many renewed opportunities God gives us to be good, to get it right. It reminds us that we are invited to follow Jesus, and that loving God means looking out for each other. That is our most perfect witness to these things.