

Third Sunday of Easter
1st April 2022



Dear Friends in Christ,

'Jesus said to them, 'Children, you have no fish, have you?' (John 21: 5)

For Christians in a world which is struggling to cope with so many injustices and tragedies, it has been a blessing for us to pause and rejoice in the risen Lord during Eastertide. As we look on, horrified and helpless at the situation in Ukraine and other areas of the world where people are suffering, the perfect timing of Easter helps us all to reframe what it means to be people of faith, living out the purposes of the Gospels. In this way, Easter is a time for us to remember the mystery of Christianity as the body we call 'Church,' and to recognise how the character of that body of faith, however manifest, is shaped in the final resurrection.

As much as it is awful to reflect on the horrors of human cruelty, it is equally uplifting to experience the greater number of selfless acts of love and service being undertaken around the world. In our own local area, each of our towns and villages are responding to the deep needs of the people of Ukraine. Wherwell village has, for example, gathered a great deal of much needed food, clothing and equipment which is heading out to Poland in support of those in need.

The pupils of Sparsholt School have set up their own humanitarian response, and are appealing for donations of food and toiletries on the last Thursday and Friday of every month. Please see the poster below for details of how to contribute to this gifted appeal from our young Christian activists.

UKRAINE HUMANITARIAN APPEAL

Sparsholt C of E Primary School Community

Donations desperately needed - Please Help!

We will be collecting on the last Thursday and Friday of every month!

Tinned food, instant food, dried food, snacks, protein bars, cereal bars, dried milk, baby food, sanitary products and toiletries.

Please leave outside the school, on the table under the tree. **Together we can help people impacted by the humanitarian crisis.**

These acts of compassion and love, and countless others like it, are examples of that same compassion exemplified in Jesus' words, *'Children, you have no fish, have you?'* In this weekend's scripture from John's Gospel, we are blessed with an account of Jesus' ever-present compassion for our world and its people. No longer confined in terror to the Upper Room after the tumult of Jesus' death and resurrection, the disciples have returned to Galilee and to their livelihoods as fishermen. We find them out on the Sea of Galilee; unafraid to fish, yet unlucky in their catch.

Jesus sees they have caught nothing, and realises this will impact their ability to feed their families and local community. Look how they catch no fish until Jesus appears to them. Look how, when He stands before them, their nets are so full it is difficult for these experienced fishermen to haul them in.

Jesus calls the disciples His children, and in doing so, reinforces their developing understanding of Him as Christ, the Son of God, through whom, in faith, they (and we) find true salvation. In our own lives, we also know ourselves to be God's children, and so we can learn how Jesus, in underscoring His divinity before His disciples *then*, is also encouraging us to be His disciples *now*. *'Children, you have no fish, have you?'* What a difference Jesus makes to the situations of our lives. Having faith in Him is our salvation from all we endure. He asks us to follow Him, and blesses our faltering footsteps with eternal sustenance.

Our responsibility as followers of the way, the truth and the life is to strive to live in and through the Spirit of Christ; sharing all that God gives us with each other, particularly the gift of His Son, Jesus, who is our salvation. The supposedly impromptu barbeque on the shore at Tiberius, offers yet another symbol. It is the final earthly feast Jesus will share with the disciples on earth. The next will be the banquet at the final resurrection, where those who have lived in the truth of Christ will be fed by His eternal grace.



'Miracle Catch' by Mike Moyers

John's Gospel account is not only burgeoning with fish, but also symbols of our way to salvation. John identifies a specific number of fish caught in the haul - 158. Very precise! St Augustine interprets this figure as 'a symbol for the fullness of grace of all those who partake of the Spirit.'

The miraculously unbroken nets are another symbol – this time an understanding of us as the body of Christ being unified against the stresses of our world, both in Tiberias at the time Jesus appears to His followers and in contemporary experience.

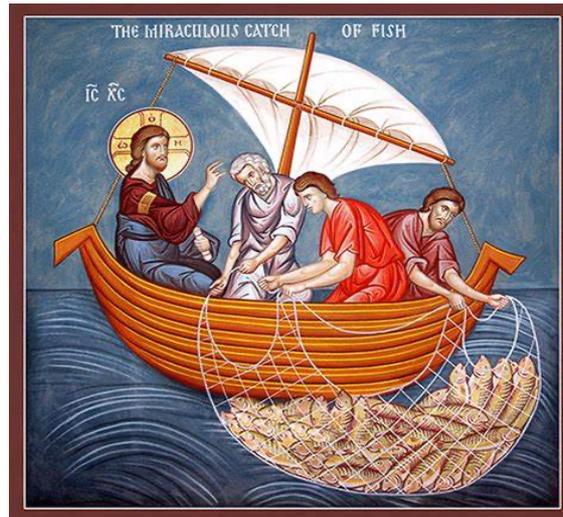
Gregory the Great expresses the symbolism of the sea as being a turbulent image of the world being tossed about, with Jesus guiding those who turn to Him in faith away from the tumult and onto the solid ground of the shore, where He feeds them with the food of life and true rest in Him. In asking this question of His flock, '*Children, you have no fish, have you?*' and in demonstrating the enormity of His generosity in response to it, Jesus brings an end to the suffering of the innocent and oppressed, the hungry and vulnerable for all time.

As we reframe our capacity for Christian compassion in the footsteps of our Saviour this Eastertide, we must be awake to the dire consequences of passive faith – lest, in the words of Gregory, 'it impacts on our future at that banquet.'

Yours, in the compassion of Christ,

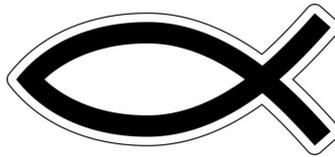
Jax

Revd Jax Machin, Rector, The Downs Benefice



Collect Prayer for The Third Sunday of Easter

Almighty Father,
who in your great mercy gladdened the disciples with the sight of the risen Lord:
give us such knowledge of His presence with us,
that we may be strengthened and sustained by His risen life
and serve you continually in righteousness and truth;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.



John 21:1-19 - Jesus and the Miraculous Catch of Fish

After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias; and he showed himself in this way. Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples. Simon Peter said to them, 'I am going fishing.' They said to him, 'We will go with you.' They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, 'Children, you have no fish, have you?' They answered him, 'No.' He said to them, 'Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some.' So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish. That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, 'It is the Lord!' When Simon

Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on some clothes, for he was naked, and jumped into the sea. But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, only about a hundred yards off.

When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. Jesus said to them, 'Bring some of the fish that you have just caught.' So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred fifty-three of them; and though there were so many, the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, 'Come and have breakfast.' Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, 'Who are you?' because they knew it was the Lord. Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

Jesus and Peter

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.'

Schedule of Services

Now that all national Coronavirus restrictions have been lifted, it is no longer necessary to book seats in our parishes for services. Neither is it mandatory for you to wear masks in church. However, Coronavirus is still very much with us. There are a number of people in our villages with it at present, so we are encouraging people to observe social distancing measures.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Ch</i>	<i>Cr</i>	<i>Li</i>	<i>Sp</i>	<i>Wh</i>
<i>1st May</i>	Morning Prayer		4pm – Café Church		
<i>8th May</i>			Holy Communion followed by APCM		Morning Prayer and Pet Service
<i>15th May</i>	Holy Communion	Morning Worship	6pm – Peace & Wholeness	8am – Holy Communion (BCP)	

<i>22nd May</i>			Christian Aid Morning Prayer Service	Morning Worship	8am – Holy Communion (BCP)
<i>26th May Ascension Day</i>			7.30am – Holy Communion followed by Breakfast in the Church Room		
<i>29th May</i>		5 th Sunday Benefice Holy Communion			
<i>5th June Pentecost / Whit Sunday / Platinum Jubilee</i>	Morning Prayer - for Her Majesty The Queen	Holy Communion	9.15am - Prayers for Her Majesty The Queen		
<i>12th June Trinity Sunday</i>	11am - Trinity Sunday Open-Air Benefice Service followed by BYO Benefice Picnic (Northwood Park)				
<i>19th June</i>	Holy Communion	Morning Worship	6pm - Peace & Wholeness	8am - Holy Communion (BCP)	
<i>22nd June</i>			Mid-week Holy Communion		
<i>26th June</i>	Thanksgiving Service for the Fete (<i>in the Fete Marquee</i>)		Morning Prayer	Morning Worship	8am – Holy Communion (BCP) <i>PLUS</i> 6pm – Spring Meditations