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Third Sunday of Easter - How Can I Keep From Singing?

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Here is Peter jumping out of a boat again (John 21:7). But he is a changed man since the last time he got out of a boat to approach Jesus (Matthew 14:28-31). The old Peter knew what he wanted to do, but his fear got in the way. He wanted to walk on water, and could, until the scariness of the situation got to him. He wanted to believe that he would never deny Jesus, but he failed when the dangerous moment came. The new Peter might still be afraid, but his fear is not sabotaging his efforts to follow Jesus. When he and the other Apostles are arrested and told to stop preaching, Peter is not swayed from his path. Rather he rejoices “that they had been found worthy to suffer dishonor for the sake of the name” (Acts 5:41). The new Peter, who is transformed by Easter joy, reminds me of an old hymn. Christ is Lord of heaven and earth! How can I keep from singing? (Revelation 5:11-14)

Fr. Chaminade wrote, “Oh, my dear son, what happiness for us if for the rest of our lives we can walk along the beautiful paths of faith, act only by faith, and live only from faith!” Peter’s life was an act of faith. He chose to “obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29) He was willing to be led where he would not go (John 21:18). Peter, after Easter, understood that there is something beyond the lamentation, tumult and strife of this world and did not let these distractions draw him from the path of faith. For Peter the obstacles increased, but, day by day his pathway smoothed, since first he learned to love it. Faith leads to joy, which is not the same thing as happiness. Happiness is in the moment. When I am happy I am content with the situation. Happiness doesn’t want things to change. I think Fr. Chaminade was writing about joy. Joy - a fruit of the virtues of faith, hope and love - is an ear attuned to the far off song. Joy springs from faith in something sure. Joy rooted in faith, hope & love moves me forward even when the situation is difficult or frightening, because I know that the Reign of Love is possible, but it requires change in me and in the situation around me. If the situation is going to change, I must sing of Christ -- Lord of Heaven and Earth, Lord of Love -- and let myself be changed by the song.



Joy rooted in faith, hope and love replaced Peter’s fear. When Jesus signifies Peter’s death and then tells him “Follow me,” Peter does, even though, as we see in the rest of Acts of the Apostles, it won’t be an easy path (John 21:18-19). I have always found the Marianist motto, “Do whatever he tells you”, a little scary. By the standards of this world, doing whatever He told them didn’t end so well for the Apostles. When I let it, Gospel joy can replace my fears and help

me to exercise the virtues of courage and fortitude. I can remain unshaken by the storms. I can sing

The peace of Christ makes fresh my heart,
A fountain ever springing;
All things are mine since I am his--
How can I keep from singing?