



## Easter Friday



**Date:** Friday, April 25, 2025 | **Season:** Easter | **Year:** C

**First Reading:** Acts 4:1–12

**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 118:1–2, 4, 22–27a | **Response:** Psalm 118:22

**Gospel Acclamation:** Psalm 118:24

**Gospel Reading:** John 21:1–14

**Preached at:** the Chapel of the Most Holy Name, Kolvenbach House in the Archdiocese of Lusaka, Zambia.

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**I**t is early morning on the Sea of Galilee. The air is cool, the sky a delicate gradient of dawn, and the water laps softly against the sides of a boat where seven weary men sit in silence. They have been fishing all night, their muscles aching, their spirits drained. And yet, for all their labor, for all their expertise, they have nothing to show for it. The nets lie empty. And in that emptiness, the deep frustration of failure settles in. There is no fish. There is no catch. Just the weight of their efforts, without reward.

And then, from the shore, a voice calls out: “Children, have you caught anything?” They answer, “No.”

This is the moment when everything changes. “Cast the net on the right side of the boat,” the voice commands, “and you will find some.” With nothing left to lose, with the sting of failure still fresh in their hearts, they obey. And what happens? Their nets—empty, bare, and futile a moment before—suddenly swell, so full they can hardly pull them in. And at that moment, one of them—John, the beloved disciple—realizes the truth. “It is the Lord!”

The net, once empty, is now overflowing, not because of their skill, not because of their strength, but because they obeyed the voice of Christ. This is the miracle of Easter. The empty nets are filled with abundance, not by human effort, but by divine grace.

This is not the first time this has happened. It recalls another moment, years before, when Peter was first called to follow Jesus. Then, too, he had labored all night with nothing to show for it. Then, too, Jesus had told him to cast the nets

once more. And Peter—when the catch came—fell to his knees in awe, recognizing the power of the One who stood before him.

Now, after the resurrection, the same scene plays out—but with a deeper meaning. Peter, who once knew only failure, shame, and the weight of his own denial, now encounters the Risen Christ. This moment is not just about a miraculous catch of fish. This is the moment of renewal. Of restoration. Of resurrection. Christ does not cast Peter aside. Christ does not condemn him for his past. No. Christ is calling him forward. “Feed my sheep,” He will soon say.

This is not just Peter’s story. It is our story. It is the story of every weary heart, every discouraged soul, every person who feels as if the nets of their life are empty. It is the story of a Church in mourning—mourning, yes, but not without hope. We mourn the passing of Pope Francis, a man who dedicated his life to the poor, to justice, to mercy. His absence is deeply felt, yet the Church is not broken. Christ is not dead. The victory of Easter remains unshaken. The empty nets are not the final word.

The death of Pope Francis is a great loss, yes, but it is not the end. The risen Christ stands on the shore, calling us forward. And we—like Peter—must follow. What is left for us to fear, if death has been swallowed up in victory?

The first reading from Acts speaks to this transformation. Just days ago, Peter—who denied Jesus three times—cowered in fear before a servant girl. But now, filled with the Holy Spirit, Peter stands boldly before the authorities who condemned Jesus, and without hesitation, proclaims: “There is no salvation through anyone else, nor is there any other name under heaven given to the human race by which we are to be saved.” He speaks with conviction. With courage. Why? Because of the resurrection. Because in Christ, death has lost its power. If death can no longer touch us, if the finality of death has been undone, then what else is there to fear?

And the Psalm rings out in the background, “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.” The One whom the world cast aside, the One whom they crucified, the One whom they buried—He has become the foundation. The rejected One is now the Redeemer. The abandoned One is now the Risen Lord.

This is the great drama of Easter. And it is not just the story of Peter. It is our story. It is the story of every heart that is tired. Every heart that is disappointed. Every heart that wonders if all their effort, all their striving, all their labour has been in vain. We all know what it is like to work and to find nothing. To pray and feel that our prayers are unanswered. To reach out, only to find our hands empty. To wonder if the promises of Easter can truly be trusted when life feels so fragile, so broken, so uncertain.

But Easter tells us something else. It tells us that the nets will be filled again. It tells us that Christ is standing on the shore, calling us to cast once more. It tells us that the empty nets are not the final word.

And so, the resurrection calls us to act. To live as though Christ has truly risen. Peter, restored by Christ, will soon be called to care for His flock, to feed His sheep. And we, too, are called to act. To embody the Resurrection, not just in our words, but in our deeds. In the ways we care for the least among us. In the ways we stand up for justice. In the ways we proclaim the dignity of every person, even in the face of adversity.

Here, in Zambia, in this time of struggle and uncertainty, in this moment of mourning and grief, what does it mean to proclaim that Christ is risen? It means we do not let the poor be forgotten. It means we do not let the hungry go without food. It means we refuse to allow despair to have the last word. The Risen Christ calls us to stand in the face of injustice and say, “Not on my watch.” The nets will be filled again.

And today, though the Octave of Easter takes precedence in our liturgy, we do not forget that this is also the feast day of St Mark the Evangelist. Mark, whose Gospel proclaims with urgency and clarity the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Mark, who handed on the story so many came to believe—the same story we proclaim in this Easter season. Though his feast is overshadowed by the radiant light of the Resurrection, his voice is not lost. It is Mark’s Gospel that ends with the trembling women at the empty tomb, unsure yet summoned to proclaim. Just like them, just like Peter, just like us—he was called to trust the Risen Christ and to cast the nets again.

And in the Ignatian tradition, we are invited to do more than hear this Gospel. We are invited to enter into it. To sit in that boat with the disciples. To feel the weight of the empty nets. To taste the frustration of failure. And then—then—to hear the voice of Christ calling us forward. “Cast the nets again.”

And when you hear it, when you feel it, know that the grace of this Easter season is to trust that the risen Christ is never far. He is standing on the shore, waiting for us. Calling us forward into a future that is more abundant than we can imagine.

And so, let us ask ourselves:

- Where in my life have I given up too soon? Where might Christ be asking me to cast my nets again, to trust that He is working, even when I cannot yet see the results?
- How is Christ calling me to care for His flock? Where am I being invited to feed the hungry, to strengthen the weak, to bring hope where there is despair?
- In what ways do I need to let the reality of the Resurrection transform my fears, my doubts, and my vision for the future?

The nets are heavy. The sea is vast. But He is standing on the shore, waiting. Will you cast them once more?

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Source: <https://sj.mcharlesworth.fr/homilies/2025-04apr-25-yc-et-01/>

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