

## ***Pastor's Reflections***

By Dr. Jeffrey E. Frantz

“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 a 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.*”

(John 21:15-17)

**The power of Easter.** In a word, the triumphant message of Easter is that love is more powerful than death.

On the other side of all the mystery at the empty tomb—around two angels in white (John), two men in dazzling clothes (Luke), a young man in a white robe (Mark), or an angel with clothing white as snow (Matthew)—the message of Easter rises up. And that message, again, is that love, ultimately, cannot be silenced.

Easter is not about proving the resurrection. It's not about proving anything. It's about affirmations rooted in faith. It's about post-Easter feelings and meanings that live on among those for whom the essence of Jesus somehow lives on in them.

Perhaps the most stunning commentary on Easter is the lives of Jesus' followers *after* the resurrection. Simply put, their lives were different. Their personal and collective identities were irreversibly changed. Peter, before the resurrection, in a compelling moment of truth, denied Jesus three times. However, after the Easter experience, there was no power under heaven that could hold back his commitment.

**Who we are as people of faith.** Part of the power of Easter is that it reminds us, every year, of who we are as people of faith. Easter people are people of love. *Simon son of John, do you love me?*

Three times, in John's gospel, Jesus asks Peter this question about his personal commitment. And each time, after Peter reassures Jesus where his commitment and passion lie, Jesus says to him: *feed my lambs, tend my sheep, feed my sheep.*

In other words, *love my people, all people.* While the question, repeated three times, might well have been in response to Peter's earlier, three-time denial of Jesus after his arrest by the high priest, still, it is direct language about love.

Easter says—emphatically—come what may, we're supposed to love one another.

Sure, the economy is on life-support with rising unemployment and a monster national debt. No matter; love one another. For sure, we have serious challenges with education and health care. No matter; love one another. No doubt, we're locked in two wars and don't seem certain how to disengage. No matter, love one another.

Easter is always a humbling experience because it rises from the ashes of that darkest of Fridays. And every time we read the scriptures about the horrors of the cross, but then the mystery and wonder of the empty tomb, we remember.

It's all about the love. Through the person and the faith of Peter, three times the risen Christ tells us: *feed my lambs, tend my sheep, feed my sheep.*

As Easter people, can we do anything less?