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The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church Faith and Order

**The Fifth Sunday of Zemene Fasika (*Paschal Season*)**

**Liturgical Readings:**

**Rom. 6:1- 15; 1 Pet. 4:4 – 12; Acts 23:15-22,**

**Psalm 107:16;**

**John 21:15– end**

**The Anaphora of Saint Dioscorus**

Christ is risen from the dead,  
(trampling down death by death)  
with high power and authority;  
binding Satan in chains and (upon those in the tombs bestowing life)  
setting Adam free,  
and from now on it will be joy and peace.

Lovest thou me?

**In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, One God. Amen.**

Beloved children of the Kingdom, we find ourselves by the mystical shores of the Sea of Tiberias, where the Risen Lord, having shattered the gates of brass and broken the bars of iron as the Psalmist declares in **Psalm 107:16**, appeared once more to His disciples. They had laboured through the watches of the night and caught nothing—a poignant symbol of the soul that strives without the light of Christ. Yet, at His word, the nets were filled, and after they had broken bread with the Master, a divine dialogue unfolded that remains the cornerstone of our pastoral vocation. Our Saviour turned to Simon Peter and asked a question that pierced like a two-edged sword: *"Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?"*

This was not a casual inquiry, but a medicinal restoration. In the shadow of the Passion, Peter had boasted with the pride of the flesh, saying, *"Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended"* (**Matthew 26:33**). Yet, when the hour of darkness arrived, the sifter of souls—Satan—desired to have him, to winnow him like wheat. Our Lord had warned him of this peril, promising to pray that his faith would not fail so that he might eventually strengthen his brethren (**Luke 22:31-32**). Having fallen thrice by the fire of denial, Peter now stood trembling before the Fire of Divinity. No longer did he boast with the pride of the flesh, nor did he claim to love more than his peers; instead, stripped of all selfreliance and clothed in the quiet humility of true repentance, the wounded shepherd met the Good Shepherd. In this sacred moment of restoration, he simply appealed to the omniscience of God, crying out: *"Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee."*

To this heartfelt confession, the Lord responded with the triple commission that defines the eternal care of the Holy Church—a mission renewed by grace. Threefold was the charge given to the one who had once faltered:

First, He commanded, **“Feed my lambs”**—the babes in Christ and the children of faith. These innocent souls, tender in mind and heart, must be nurtured with the "sincere milk of the word," protected from the shadows of error by the grace of Holy Baptism and the enduring seal of the Spirit.

Secondly, He charged him, **“Tend my sheep”**—the youth who must grow amidst the gathering tempests of pride, lust, and worldly vanity. These must be guided with paternal care through the wilderness of temptation, lest they stray into the parched lands of unbelief.

Finally, He commanded, **“Feed my sheep”**—the mature faithful and the elders of the flock. It is they who must remain steadfast in the worship of the Most High, anchored in the heights of Divine Love and unshaken by the shifting storms of this world. Through this divine dialogue, the brokenness of man was woven into the strength of the Church, proving that where love is restored, the mission is eternal.

In this sacred exchange, we see the mystery of our transformation. As St. Paul teaches in **Romans 6:1-15**, we who were baptized into Christ were baptized into His death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. Peter, once dead in his denial, was now alive unto God. This new life, however, is not a path of worldly ease but of sacrificial witness. Our Lord prophesied the nature of Peter’s end: *"When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself... but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not."* He spoke this to signify by what manner of death Peter would glorify God—a death of stretching forth hands upon a cross, mirroring the Master he once fled.

We learn from the **Acts of the Apostles (23:15-22)** and the general epistles that the life of the faithful is one of constant vigilance against the conspiracies of the enemy and the trials of the world. St. Peter himself later exhorted us in **1 Peter 4:4-12** not to be "strange" to the fiery trial which is to try us, as though some strange thing happened unto us, but to rejoice in being partakers of Christ’s sufferings. This is the essence of the Orthodox life: to love Christ is to embrace His Cross. A servant of the Church cannot be a hireling; though he possesses the tongue of angels, the zeal of the prophets, or the knowledge of the wise, if he lacks the love of Christ, his ministry is but a tinkling cymbal. To follow Him is to surrender our own will, to be "girded" by the Gospel, and to be led not where our flesh desires, but where the glory of God demands. May the Almighty God, who restored the Chief of Apostles, grant us the spirit of true repentance and the fire of divine love, that we may faithfully guard the flock He purchased with His own Blood.

**Christ is risen from the dead! Glory be to God. Amen.**