*Blessed be God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By His great mercy He has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith, being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. Although you have not seen Him, you love Him, and even though you do not see Him now, you believe in Him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.*

1 Peter 1:3-9

*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 his outer garment, for he had taken it off, 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.*

John 21:1-14

*Jim was coming out of church one day, and the preacher was standing at the door as he always is to shake hands. He grabbed Jim’s hand and pulled him aside then he said: "Jim, You need to join the Army of the Lord!"*

*Jim replied: "I'm already in the Army of the Lord, Pastor."*

*The Pastor questioned: "How come I don't see you except at Christmas and Easter?"*

*The guy whispered back: "I'm in the secret service. "*

The Treasure Hunters

1. Somewhere around late 80’s and early 90’s a popular phrase has been formed: *“Recycle and reuse.”* Last week I shared with you a joke where children easily grasped the concept of “*recycling*,” but had no idea of the meaning and concept of the “*resurrection*” as pertaining to Easter celebration. It is true that “*recycling*” and “*reuse*” hold very significant meaning in the world today because humanity indeed thoroughly polluted the environment. I also believe that the concept of “*recycling*” and “*reusing*” has a deep Christian meaning, but this meaning has been largely ignored by many people.

2. Let me explain what I mean. Following the Second World War, the American economy grew with an incredible speed. This economic boom created a market for the so-called “*disposable items*” that became very popular. This tendency eventually spread all over the world and the “*disposable products*” today dominate daily lives in almost every household all over the world. People do not bother anymore trying to repair broken items, and if they do, it is for the sentimental reasons rather than the economic value. After all, it is much easier and often much cheaper, to buy a new item rather than to fix it. Even the so called idea of “*recycling*” and “*reusing*” has not focused on repair but on stripping the broken item for the “*resource material*.” This attitude of replacing took over all aspects of our life, including the Church. A new word took a brand new meaning and became a part of life in theory and in practice: “*convenience*.”

3. Yet, in all this fascination with disposable items, we have overlooked a danger of pollution so, to remedy the problem the idea of “*recycling*” and “*reusing*” was created. But this is not something new. What we do now is nothing but reinventing the proverbial “*wheel*.” We learn to find uses for many of the products that not so long ago would go to the dump. In other words, we began searching for missing treasures, according to the old saying: *“One man’s garbage is another man’s treasure.”* As I said, this also happens in the Church. In the past 50-60 years we did not only got rid of many customs and traditions, but also lost touch with the needs of many people. I believe that Jesus’ motto for His ministry included the concepts of *“reusing and recycling.”* Look at His ministry. While crisscrossing the country with His disciples, Jesus always searched for the people in need. People that have been neglected, forgotten, or disposed of as *“good for nothing.”* He healed the man who for 37 years laid at the pool of Bethesda, and nobody cared. He restored a sight of a blind man called Bartimaeus, while others wanted the man to remain silent (Mark 10:52). He healed and brought back into the society the cast out lepers (Luke 17:12-19). Jesus was always ready to help the needy, and He was salvaging the lives of those who were lost: *“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.”* (Luke 19:10)

4. Jesus constantly engaged not only in prayer, preaching, counseling but in the work of restoring and rebuilding shattered lives. Even while His work on earth was approaching the end, when He was nailed to the Cross, He was still concerned with the well-being of those He loved, including those who crucified Him. Through His resurrection on Easter Sunday, He also proved that He cared for people. We saw this in His words: *“Do not be afraid,”* spoken to Mary who came to a tomb. As we read in John’s account, when Jesus appeared to His disciples at the Sea of Galilee He did so because they were lost, not knowing what to do next, where to go and how to live. Look at Peter, the one that has denied Him; look at Thomas, the skeptical one, look at John who loved Him and whom Jesus loved and yet who also lost all hope…

5. Jesus came to bring them more than peace. He did not come just to have breakfast with them. *“Have you anything to eat?”* – He asks. But this is not the food cooked on the fire He indicates. He talks about the spiritual food, one they need, but they lack of. *“Do you love me, Peter?”* – He asks Peter three times at the same breakfast, and not because He does not know what Peter answer would be, but because Peter needed this counseling session. We, the Church, are also a needy group just as the disciples were while locked in the room behind the closed doors out of fear, or returning to the old trades because they lost all hope. We too need the spiritual, daily meals, to strengthen and to cultivate our spirit. We are the people that sooner or later must realize that we cannot save ourselves and provide for ourselves, contrary to what the so called people of the science, the philosophers, the government leaders and even some religious leaders say, and try to convince us of. We need the support of Jesus Christ.

6. Jesus is the only Redeemer who may save us and restore our shattered world and our shattered lives. But first we must realize the need. As witnessing the global ecological problem the world slowly turns to reusing and recycling, we as Christians must realize that the Church needs similar program. Christ will help us if we only will seriously follow Him and His call, not our whims, whatever they may be and however good they may sound on the surface. Jesus promised not to abandon us, but instead promised to be with us to the very end. Please, do not misunderstand me. I am not trying to say that everything new and disposable is no good or that anything contemporary and modern is a waste. I believe that there is a place for disposable items in this world, but I also believe that there is too much emphasis and attention on new ideas, new products, new visions. I simply believe that we can reuse and salvage a lot of materials, be it products, customs, people or even language and by the same token to reuse the old traditions, old views, old principles of life and faith. We just need guidance, and Jesus is willing to offer us His.

7. Now I would like to add a third “R” into the process. This third “r” is: “*reduce*.” What this world and the Church needs is to reduce the unnecessary diversities, problems, confusions, misconceptions. As the Church we must become one in order to continue to grow and to influence the society. As we can see every week, the world is filled with hate, evilness, pride, prejudice, greed, want, “my way or a highway” attitude, the list goes on and on. To many people today want the glory and honor for themselves, but not for Christ. In the second installment of the Star Trek movies, Mr. Spock coined unforgettable phrase: *“The needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few”* and Captain Kirk added *“or the one.”* Today unfortunately this logic has been replaced by the totally opposite statement: *“The need of the one outweighs the need of the many.”* No wonder that our civilization moves closer and closer to the brink of extinction. In pursuit of the whims of an individual, the entire society must *“bend backwards”* to that whim.

8. As the society and as the Church, we must rethink our attitudes and programs. We must rethink our structures and our strategies. We must embrace the guidance of Jesus Christ because this is the only way in which we might be transformed and created anew. Only the Spirit of the Living God may open our eyes, show us direction, and made us truly one as the people, the society, and the Church. No man-made laws, philosophies, ideologies, or any other means will be able to achieve what only God can. He has proven this through Christ’s death and Christ’s resurrection.