

EASTER SUNDAY

April 16, 2017 A, B, C

Opening Prayer: *O Light of Lights, Risen Jesus, enter our hearts with your Good News. Enlighten our minds to understand that you have overcome death by your own dying and rising. Melt our frozen hearts with this Easter fire, that in our hearts of flesh we might come to believe that you forgive even our sins. Help us to see your presence everywhere as the first light of dawn beams upon our clouded vision. O Radiant Light, be in our midst as we gather to more clearly hear your Word of Life. Amen.*

Sharing life: Can you name one or more resurrection experiences in your lifetime when God was helping you to overcome some painful or difficult experiences in your life?

Facilitator reads focus statement: All three readings focus on Jesus' Resurrection from the dead and its meaning for our lives. In the first reading from Acts, Peter states that all who come to believe in the Risen Christ will have their sins forgiven. In both of the alternative second readings, Paul stresses the moral dimension of the Resurrection. In the Gospel, Peter and John go on an 'Easter jog' to the tomb. Even though Peter gets there first, John is the first to believe that Christ is risen.

Consider reading the commentary before or after each Scripture reading.

FIRST READING: Acts 10:34, 37-43

This is an excerpt from the last of several sermons of Peter found in Acts. What makes this sermon unique is that it comes right after the vision Peter has during which God reveals that Jesus has come not only to offer salvation to the Jews, but also to the Gentiles – to all people.

In this sermon, we hear about the scope and spread of the Gospel. The story of Jesus' baptism, his public ministry, death and Resurrection has been reported all over the land. The power of Jesus' ministry flows from him being anointed by God with the Holy Spirit. Peter lists himself as a witness to all these wondrous events. Peter concludes by stating that *all*—through faith and repentance—now have access to the salvation that Jesus has come to bring.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM 118

This thanksgiving psalm is applied to all the great things God has done in Christ, especially raising him from the dead. *"This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad."*

SECOND READING: Colossians 3:1-4 or 1Corinthians 5:6-8

The two alternative second readings declare that the Resurrection is the foundation of new life for those who believe. In the *Colossians* reading, Paul reminds his readers that through baptism, they had died and have been raised up, and that they should live

accordingly. In the *Corinthians* reading, Paul, using the imagery of yeast, states that because of our new life in Christ, we can make no accommodation to sin.

GOSPEL: John 20:1-9

Commenting on today's Gospel, Terence Keegan writes:

In the prologue of John's Gospel one reads, "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" (1:5). This image of darkness and light, as also the images death/life and falsehood/ truth, recur throughout the Gospel and lie behind the story of today's reading. Mary Magdalene comes "while it is still dark" and mistakenly thinks that "the Lord has been taken from the tomb" (20:2). Simon Peter saw the piece of cloth rolled up (20:7); hardly something that anyone stealing the body would have done, but apparently did not know what to make of this strange clue. The other disciple, when he entered, not only saw but also believed. This belief is the first instance of Resurrection faith in John's Gospel. In the language of the fourth Gospel, faith is the way in which an individual passes from darkness into light, from death to life, from falsehood to truth. Faith does not result from deduction but is a gift from God bestowed in virtue of the triumphant death/ Resurrection of Jesus.

The author is careful to emphasize the extraordinary nature of this faith in the final verse of today's reading. Only when this gift is received, only when one has entered into the light, does the full meaning

of the words of the Old Testament and the mysterious words and deeds of Jesus become clear. Only then does the significance of the rolled up cloth become clear. Today's story is not about the disciples interpreting the empty tomb, but rather about the initial gift of faith by which one enters into the light, the truth and the life of Jesus' Resurrection.

FAITH-SHARING QUESTIONS

1. What verse spoke to you most in today's readings? Why?
2. The apostles were surely surprised by the events of Easter morning. Can you recall a time when God surprised you?
3. Easter is the victory of life over death, of light over darkness, of goodness over evil. Can you recall a Good Friday event in your life from which good and blessing came?
4. What is the challenge of Easter for you?

RESPONDING TO THE WORD

Name one way you can act on today's readings. Suggestions: Seek to be more aware that God's plan is to always draw goodness out of the painful experiences of life. Seek to be an Easter presence for someone going through a Good Friday experience.

CONCLUDE WITH PRAYERS OF PETITION AND INTERCESSION

Pray for those going through a Good Friday experience. Pray that you can be a sign of hope for people dealing with pain. Pray that our Risen Lord may touch the hearts of Catholics who only go to church at Easter, that they may be drawn back to the Lord's Table. ©

CLOSING PRAYER

*Blessed are you, Father
for raising your beloved Son, Jesus
from the dead
and bringing us to faith
in his saving death and Resurrection.
Give us a taste of the joy
that filled the hearts of the first disciples,
and help us to trust in the life
that is promised through faith in him.
We ask this in the name of Jesus the Lord.
Amen.*