

THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER

April 26, 2020 A

Facilitator: *Let us take a minute to consciously acknowledge that we are in the presence of God and ask him to help us to hear the Word he wants us to hear this week.*

Pause for a moment and then play a religious song.

Opening prayer: *Lord Jesus, in today's Gospel you appear to two disciples who have begun to lose hope and open their eyes to what the Scriptures foretold: that you must die first and then rise and ascend into your Father's glorious presence. May you breathe on our minds and open our eyes that we may recognize your presence in our breaking open your Word and follow you in your risen life. Amen.*

Response to last week's Word: [Facilitator briefly recalls last week's Gospel.] *Let us spend a few minutes sharing how the Word we heard God speak to us last week has unfolded in our lives during the week.*

Facilitator reads focus statement: The first reading is the first of six major homilies which Peter gives in the *Acts of the Apostles*. In the second reading, Peter exhorts his readers to “conduct themselves with reverence” and to refrain from “futile conduct.” In the Gospel, Jesus opens the eyes of two disciples to his presence in the Eucharist as they travel with him to the village of Emmaus.

Let us listen to God's Word to hear what it is he wants to say to us in these readings today. As you hear a word, you may want to underline it or write it down to remember.

Read the first reading, the psalm and the second reading, pausing briefly after each one.

FIRST READING: Acts 2:14, 22-23

Luke builds a bridge between Jesus and the Church. In last Sunday's Gospel, Jesus breathes on the Apostles, infusing them with the Holy Spirit and empowering them to preach the Good news.

In this reading, we witness Peter and the other Apostles doing just that: preaching the Good News about Jesus, the One sent by God to bring salvation to all the people. Even though Jesus is able to work signs and wonders, he is rejected by his own people (but raised up by God).

Jesus's death is not a random act but a part of the mystery of God's plan that also includes his Resurrection and his exaltation in the glory of heaven. Peter is not accusing his fellow Jews but pointing out God's plan of salvation.

In the middle of the reading, we have a quotation from Psalm 16:8-11. The New Testament writers often quoted the Old Testament to show their readers that Jesus' coming and death were foretold in their own Hebrew scriptures.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM 16

This psalm expresses confidence and trust in God.

SECOND READING: 1Peter 1:17-21

Although the earliest believers in Jesus do find themselves 'at home' in their newly discovered way of living, they also realize that because of their faith in Jesus, they are no longer 'at home' in the world. They feel like 'sojourners in a strange land.' In today's reading, Peter urges these sojourners to “conduct themselves with reverence.” They must remember that they were delivered from a “futile way of life”—not by silver and gold but by the *Precious Blood of Jesus*.

PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL: Luke 24:13-35

As we listen to this first reading of the Gospel, let us listen with our minds for the content.

**A participant reads the Gospel,
then all pause to reflect.**

As we listen to this second reading of the Gospel, let us listen with our hearts to what Jesus is saying to us. Be aware of what draws us in and what part of the Gospel might be a challenge to embrace. You may want to underline or write down the word you hear.

GOSPEL: Luke 24:13-35

This is Luke's well-known and loved Emmaus journey story. In it we notice a movement from the darkness of unbelief to the light of faith, a movement from despair to hope. It is also a beautiful instruction on the presence of Jesus in the Eucharist.

The first part of the story is like our *Liturgy of the Word*. Jesus proclaims a word to the two despairing disciples and opens their eyes to the *meaning* of the Scriptures.

Then we have a *Liturgy of the Eucharist*. Just as he did at the Last Supper, Jesus *takes* bread, *blesses* it, *breaks* it and *gives* it to the disciples. In the *breaking of the bread*, the eyes of the disciples are opened and they come to believe in Jesus' presence. Some commentators note that Luke uses this story to communicate to those who are missing the *physical* presence of Christ, that their celebration of the Eucharist is the new way that Jesus is going to be with them. Just as he fed them prior to the Resurrection with his teaching, now he will continue to feed and nourish them in and through the proclamation of the Scriptures and the breaking of the bread. When they (and we) gather together to listen to his Word and break bread, Jesus is truly in our midst.

FAITH-SHARING QUESTIONS

1. Turn to the person next to you and share what verse or image in the readings caught your attention or drew you in. Was there a verse or aspect of the readings that challenged you?

The facilitator can decide which is more helpful: to share the next questions with the whole group, or to share in smaller groups of three or four.

2. The Christians in today's second reading felt like 'aliens' in their world. In what ways might Christians feel like aliens in today's world? What are concrete examples of 'futile conduct' mentioned by Peter?

3. Like the two disciples in today's Gospel, we too are on a spiritual journey. What do we have in common with the two disciples? What can we learn from their experience?

4. Have you ever felt as if your heart was "burning within you" because of some touch or experience of God?

5. Name one thing today's Gospel says to us that we disciples of Jesus need to heed and act on.

RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD

Share with the person next to you one way you can act on this week's readings. Suggestions: The next time you attend Mass, try to be more attentive to the awesome event that you are privileged to participate in. Also, examine whether you are presently engaged in any "futile conduct," and if so, turn away from it. Is there a fire burning in your heart: words of forgiveness not spoken, a lie not confessed, or encouragement not offered? Find a way to express it this week.

JOURNALING. *Having listened to God's Word and listened to others' reflections on it, take a quiet moment to reflect on what you are hearing God say to you. Your response will be what you bring to Eucharist on Sunday, asking Jesus to help you respond as he asks of you. When ready, jot down your reflections.*

PRAYING WITH THE WORD

Facilitator: Let us now pause to see how something(s) said in the reading might lead us into shared prayer. Suggestion: *Jesus, as you joined the two disciples on their journey, so do you always accompany me in my walk with you. Open my eyes to see your presence and hear your word to me. Amen.*

CONCLUDE WITH PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING, PETITION AND INTERCESSION

Facilitator: Especially pray for persecuted Christians, and for a new awakening to Jesus' presence in the Eucharist.

CLOSING PRAYER (together)

*Jesus,
walk with us in the journey of life.
Make our hearts burn with a
sense of your presence.
Help us to be zealous messengers
of your love and mercy.
Amen.*