

Bible Study

Third Sunday of Easter, cycle A

Opening Prayer: (Sign of the Cross) “Lord our God, during this Easter season you give us the joy of recalling the rising of Christ to new life and His establishment of his Church. May the words that we read today and the thoughts that we share increase our awareness of the many blessings which you bestow on your daughters and sons who have died and risen to new life with Jesus in Baptism. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.”

Focusing Questions

1. Today’s readings discuss how intimately God is involved in our lives. How did you perhaps experience that closeness during the past week?
2. What is the difference between fate and coincidence and God having a plan?

Commentary before the First Reading: Acts 2:14, 22-33

This reading is taken from Saint Peter’s speech to the crowds that gathered when they heard the sound of strong, driving wind which accompanied the descent of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Saint Luke, the author of Acts, was not present. Therefore, what we read were not the exact words of Peter. They are the essence of what eye witnesses passed down to Saint Luke, which he then composed into this first apostolic sermon.

Read the First Reading aloud.

1. “Peter ... with the Eleven” makes twelve Apostles. Since Judas Iscariot is already dead, who is the 12th Apostle that is being counted here? (see Acts 1:26)
2. According to this speech, how did God attempt to reveal to the Jewish people that Jesus was the Promised Messiah?
3. How could the vast majority of the Chosen People miss this basic truth?
4. Reread verse 23 carefully. Is Peter condemning the Jewish people for killing Jesus?
5. In quoting King David’s Psalm 16, which remarkable truth about Jesus was Peter attempting to prove?

Commentary before the Second Reading: 1 Peter 1:17-21

During the rest of this Easter season the Second Reading for each Sunday is a portion of the First Letter of Saint Peter. The letter was written either by Saint Peter shortly before his death or by a close associate who put Saint Peter’s frequent thoughts into words after his death. The writer is exhorting his readers to live in a way that is in keeping with their baptism. Today’s reading emphasizes how right we are to place our hope in Christ.

Read the Second Reading aloud.

1. According to this passage, why did (and do) unbaptized persons so frequently live sinful lives?
2. Compare verse 19 with Exodus 12:5. To what is Peter comparing Jesus?
3. The blood from the first Passover lamb delivered the Jews from the death of the firstborn of every family living in Egypt. From what did the blood of the new Passover Lamb deliver them (and us)?
4. Which verse makes a similar point to that of Acts 2:23? What is that point?

Commentary before the Gospel Reading: Luke 24:13-35

In Saint Luke’s account of the resurrection, Jesus reveals himself to his disciples before they even get far from Jerusalem, from the scene of his death. The 2 in this reading had just left Jerusalem for the seven mile walk to Emmaus. It appears that they are not two of the 12 apostles, but have been faithful followers of Jesus.

Read the Gospel Reading aloud.

1. Speak a word or phrase that you enjoyed hearing in this reading.
2. What kind of redeemer were many of the disciples of Jesus expecting (verse 21)?
3. See John 20:1-2 and Luke 24:10. Who were the women and men referred to in verses 22-24 of this Gospel reading?
4. Point out moments in the 2 men’s conversation with Jesus when they perhaps should have realized that this “stranger” was, in fact, Jesus?
5. Which statement by Jesus started to rebuild their hope in the Messiah?
6. How did they finally recognize him as Jesus? What is significant about that for us?

Applying the Readings to our Daily Lives

1. What can we learn about eternal life from this important detail: some of Jesus' closest friends failed to recognize him after the resurrection, even when he stood right in front of them?
2. Can you recall a time when God seemed far away or difficult to see in life around you?
3. Do you believe that God brings good out of every tragedy? If not, why doesn't He always do so?
4. Has there ever been a time when you expected God to do something for you in a certain way, and God failed to match your expectations? How did you feel about that? What was the end result?
5. Talk about how difficult it is for you – and perhaps for others whom you know – to recognize the Real Presence of Jesus in the consecrated bread and wine?
6. Which actions do you typically perform which prove your faith in the Body and Blood of Jesus?

Closing Prayer (an adaptation of Psalm 16)

Keep me safe, O God, for my life is solely in your hands.
I say, "You are my Lord, and no other.
You are my path, you are my guide, and
you are my ultimate destiny.
I give you praise and thanks, O Lord;
I bless you, the One who advises and encourages me.
I have set my sights on you and I will never give up.
Therefore, my heart and my soul rejoice,
and my body moves with confidence,
because I know that you will never turn your back on me
and you will never send me to hell if I have been faithful.
Rather, you will reveal to me the pathway that gives life,
and you will fill me with joy in your presence for ever.
Amen.

(Sign of the Cross)