

## Second Sunday of Easter Year A readings and commentary

**Celebration summary by Dale J. Sieverding:** John places this resurrection appearance of Jesus on the “first day of the week” which would have been an “anniversary” sometime distant of the day of resurrection. The Gospel passage for today’s liturgy has two key points: the handing over of the Spirit for the forgiveness of sins and the admonition to Thomas, “blessed are those who have not seen and have believed.” Written more than a generation after the tragic events of the crucifixion and triumphant day of resurrection, these last words were no doubt an encouragement to the community of disciples to shore up their belief in Jesus, the Son of God.

The passage from the Acts of the Apostles presents the community of believers in idyllic terms: devoted to the teaching of the apostles, the communal life, the breaking of the bread (Eucharist) and the prayers (psalms). The evangelist known as Luke writes in the Acts of the Apostles of a tight-knit community that experienced the fruits of the resurrection; namely, signs, wonders and miracles. The result was the growth of a Church into a movement that would have great success.

The selection from the First Letter of Peter speaks of suffering “through various trials” that the community will face in order to test the genuineness of their faith in the fires of suffering.

The Scriptures of today call the Church back to the basics which is apostolic teaching and sharing of the Eucharist. We are a people that have not seen, yet believe in the power of Jesus Christ victorious over sin and death. © 2008, OCP. All rights reserved.

## **First Reading: Acts 2:42-47**

*All who believed were together and had all things in common.*

### **A reading from the Acts of the Apostles**

They devoted themselves

to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life,  
to the breaking of bread and to the prayers.

Awe came upon everyone,

and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.

All who believed were together and had all things in common;

they would sell their property and possessions

and divide them among all according to each one's need.

Every day they devoted themselves

to meeting together in the temple area

and to breaking bread in their homes.

They ate their meals with exultation and sincerity of heart,

praising God and enjoying favor with all the people.

And every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

### **The word of the Lord.**

**Commentary Acts 2:42-47 by John Paul Heil:** Main Theme: Our Eucharistic meal fellowship leads us to share with others.

The ideal table fellowship of the Jerusalem believers demonstrated one of the ways in which they were witnesses for the mission of proclaiming repentance for the forgiveness of sins to all nations beginning from Jerusalem (Acts 1:8). Their glad and generous Eucharistic meal fellowship, in which they celebrated the joy of their own repentance for the forgiveness of their sins (Acts 2:38), attracted the favor of the people, so that "daily the Lord was adding those who were being saved to the community" (Acts 2:47) in correspondence to their daily meal fellowship (Acts 2:46). Likewise, through the Eucharistic meal fellowship by which we celebrate our own repentance for the forgiveness of sins, we can be witnesses who attract others to repent and be forgiven, and so share in the joy and generosity of our communal meal fellowship.

Also, our Eucharistic table fellowship should result in a glad and generous sharing of our food and possessions with one another, especially those who are most needy among us (Acts 6:1-3). By practicing and promoting Eucharistic celebrations that lead us to selflessly serve one another in imitation of Jesus himself (Luke 22:24-27), rather than seek individualistic honors and social repayment (Luke 14:7-14), we assure our inclusion in the final banquet of the kingdom of God (Luke 14:15-24).

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### **Responsorial Psalm** Psalm 118:2-4, 13-15, 22-24

(1) Give thanks to the Lord for he is good, his love is everlasting.

Or: ✠ Alleluia.

Let the house of Israel say,  
"His mercy endures forever."  
Let the house of Aaron say,  
"His mercy endures forever."  
Let those who fear the LORD say,  
"His mercy endures forever."

I was hard pressed and was falling,  
but the LORD helped me.  
My strength and my courage is the LORD,  
and he has been my savior.  
The joyful shout of victory  
in the tents of the just.

The stone which the builders rejected  
has become the cornerstone.  
By the LORD has this been done;  
it is wonderful in our eyes.  
This is the day the LORD has made;  
let us be glad and rejoice in it.

**Commentary Psalm 118:2-4, 13-15, 22-24: By Tom Conry:** The idea of the "cornerstone" can refer either to the square stone that supports the corner of a building or to the capstone of a building. The proverb in verse 22 is a proclamation of reversal, and is attached to the situation of the man who was taken for dead and is now fully alive. Within the psalm there is a constant alternating of the situation of the individual with the social situation of the community; in its performance it seems to make the journey from death to life of one person the symbol and inspiration of the whole group.

"The day that the Lord has made" (or, perhaps better, "the day on which the Lord has acted") marks the setting of this psalm as an important feast. The followers of Jesus took up this song and applied it to their own circumstances.

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## **Second Reading 1 Peter 1:3-9**

*God has given us new birth to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.*

### **A reading from the first Letter of Saint Peter**

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
who in his great mercy gave us a new birth to a living hope  
through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,  
to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading,  
kept in heaven for you  
who by the power of God are safeguarded through faith,  
to a salvation that is ready to be revealed in the final time.  
In this you rejoice, although now for a little while  
you may have to suffer through various trials,  
so that the genuineness of your faith,  
more precious than gold that is perishable even though tested by  
fire,

may prove to be for praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Although you have not seen him you love him; even though you do not see him now yet believe in him, you rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, as you attain the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

### **The word of the Lord.**

#### **Commentary 1 Peter 1:3-9 by Fr. Damien Dougherty, O.F.M.:**

The Christians' joy is based within this situation in which they are already living right, arriving at the finishing line of faith, i.e., their salvation. To understand the theological import of the term "salvation" its earliest meaning must be gleaned from Scripture as there is a development along two lines: on the one hand "salvation" indicates a material reality (from enemies, diseases, difficulties) and, then, to a superior reality (salvation from sins, from God's judgment); on the other hand, the initiative and execution of salvation are reserved to God's exclusive endowment.

Likewise, salvation is God's constituting a people, "saving" them from Egypt, enemies, themselves, their infidelities. In the NT salvation assumes its full meaning in Jesus, solely capable of taking the salvific initiative connected with physical, material elements (healings); yet, it refers beyond the material level. With Jesus, salvation is synonymous with belonging to the kingdom of God, within its present and future states.

"Salvation" therefore has the following, essential implications within biblical language. It supposes a project that has to be realized: the eschatological kingdom of God with all its implications. The human being, however, is inadequate: morally weak, he sins, he runs risks. Then God intervenes enabling human beings for their realization by preparing, within the person that which will be the future, eschatological stage. The biblical concept of salvation is essentially global with the personal, social aspect, the commitment within the present and the waiting for the future: at one and the same time, gift and conquest.

**Gospel Acclamation** John 20:29 ✠ Alleluia, alleluia.

You believe in me, Thomas, because you have seen me, says the Lord; blessed are they who have not seen me, but still believe!

✠ Alleluia, alleluia.

**Gospel John 20:19-31**

*Eight days later Jesus came and stood in their midst.*

**A reading from the holy Gospel according to John**

On the evening of that first day of the week,  
when the doors were locked, where the disciples were,  
for fear of the Jews,  
Jesus came and stood in their midst  
and said to them, "Peace be with you."  
When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side.  
The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.  
Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you.  
As the Father has sent me, so I send you."  
And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them,  
"Receive the Holy Spirit.  
Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them,  
and whose sins you retain are retained."

Thomas, called Didymus, one of the Twelve,  
was not with them when Jesus came.  
So the other disciples said to him, "We have seen the Lord."  
But he said to them,  
"Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands  
and put my finger into the nail marks  
and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."

Now a week later his disciples were again inside

and Thomas was with them.  
Jesus came, although the doors were locked,  
and stood in their midst and said, "Peace be with you."  
Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands,  
and bring your hand and put it into my side,  
and do not be unbelieving, but believe."  
Thomas answered and said to him, "My Lord and my God!"  
Jesus said to him, "Have you come to believe because you have seen  
me?  
Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed."

Now, Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples  
that are not written in this book.  
But these are written that you may come to believe  
that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God,  
and that through this belief you may have life in his name.

## **The Gospel of the Lord.**

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**John 20:19-31 Commentary by Tom Conry:** Stories of the appearances of Jesus after his crucifixion began to circulate through the churches very early on. These experiences of the risen Christ to individuals and groups were put into narrative form and told over and over.

Here the disciples are gathered together in the locked upper room, still filled with fear of the Judean elite who had cooperated with imperial Rome in arranging Jesus' execution. The background of this fear is not unfounded; not only are they under suspicion for their association with Jesus, but now the tomb is reported as being empty, and those who disturb graves are liable to capital punishment. In the midst of this tense situation, Jesus appears and breathes peace into their midst. In the early churches, baptism was the time when God

bestowed the spirit, and this ritual breathing of Jesus fulfills the earlier promise of a baptism of the spirit for the disciples.

In the next appearance story, Thomas is reproached for not believing without seeing, but, as Jesus' earlier appearance has made clear, the rest of the disciples likewise needed proof, i.e. Jesus' manifestation in a locked room, before they would believe. The entire community, including Mary Magdalene, only believed when they saw. Jesus' words here indicate that from now, it is the testimony of the community that must be taken as authentic. Jesus has given the community authority to resolve disputes within the group (20:23) and, from now on, the demand for miracles will be taken as a sign of a lack of understanding and maturity.