

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Jn 3: 16

Glory and praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ! /
God loved the world so much, he gave us
his only Son, / that all who believe in him
might have eternal life. / Glory and praise
to you, Lord Jesus Christ!

GOSPEL

Jn 3:14-21

A reading from the holy Gospel according
to John.

*God sent his Son into the world that we might be
saved through him.*

Jesus said to Nicodemus:

‘The Son of Man must be lifted up as Moses
lifted up the serpent in the desert, so that
everyone who believes may have eternal life in
him. Yes, God loved the world so much that he
gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes
in him may not be lost but may have eternal
life. For God sent his Son into the world not
to condemn the world, but so that through him
the world might be saved. No one who believes
in him will be condemned; but whoever refuses
to believe is condemned already, because he has
refused to believe in the name of God’s only
Son. On these grounds is sentence pronounced:
that though the light has come into the world
men have shown they prefer darkness to the
light because their deeds were evil. And indeed,
everybody who does wrong hates the light and
avoids it, for fear his actions should be exposed;
but the man who lives by the truth comes out
into the light, so that it may be plainly seen that
what he does is done in God.’

■ **The Gospel of the Lord.****A SERVICE OF THE SOCIETY OF ST PAUL**

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Breaking Open the Word

LOVING IS GIVING

Some years ago, a young married man asked
me to try and put the story of the Scriptures
into a sentence or two. My reply was that the
story that the Scriptures tell is a love story,
a love that always provides us with a new
beginning, especially when we least deserve
or expect it. He then exclaimed; ‘There you
are, why did you have to bring sin into it?’
I took his point about the need to be positive,
but the Scriptures teach that a reality we
can’t seem to avoid is that our choices are not
always what they might be.

The point I was trying to make was that God
does not avoid us, even if we cannot seem
to avoid sin. The first reading is a classic
example of a new and unexpected life offered
to the people of Israel in the midst of exile.
The Chronicler has no doubts that the exile
was fully deserved. The wonder is that there
is another opportunity at all! The Gospel
passage could not state it more beautifully:
‘God so loved the world that he gave his only
Son’. God’s will for us is always that we come
into the fullness of life. While we may fear
God’s judgement, the real judgement to fear
is the one that we make ourselves. Paul speaks
of each of us as a work of art. The challenge
of Lent is: What kind of work of art do we
wish to be?

Christopher Monaghan CP

THE SAVING WORD

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT / B

14 MARCH 2021

FIRST READING

2 Chron 36: 14-16, 19-23

A reading from the second book of Chronicles.

*The wrath and the mercy of the Lord are revealed in
the exile and liberation of his people.*

All the heads of the priesthood, and the people
too, added infidelity to infidelity, copying all the
shameful practices of the nations and defiling
the Temple that the Lord had consecrated for
himself in Jerusalem. The Lord, the God of
their ancestors, tirelessly sent them messenger
after messenger, since he wished to spare his
people and his house. But they ridiculed the
messengers of God, they despised his words,
they laughed at his prophets, until at last the
wrath of the Lord rose so high against his people
that there was no further remedy.

Their enemies burned down the Temple of
God, demolished the walls of Jerusalem, set
fire to all its palaces, and destroyed everything
of value in it. The survivors were deported by
Nebuchadnezzar to Babylon; they were to serve
him and his sons until the kingdom of Persia
came to power. This is how the word of the Lord
was fulfilled that he spoke through Jeremiah,
‘Until this land has enjoyed its sabbath rest,
until seventy years have gone by, it will keep
sabbath throughout the days of its desolation.’

And in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia,
to fulfil the word of the Lord that was spoken
through Jeremiah, the Lord roused the spirit
of Cyrus king of Persia to issue a proclamation
and to have it publicly displayed throughout
his kingdom: ‘Thus speaks Cyrus king of Persia,
“The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all
the kingdoms of the earth; he has ordered me
to build him a Temple in Jerusalem, in Judah.
Whoever there is among you of all his people,
may his God be with him! Let him go up.”’

■ **The word of the Lord.****RESPONSORIAL PSALM**

Ps 136. R. v. 6

R. Let my tongue be silenced, if I ever
forget you!



1. By the rivers of Babylon / there we sat and
wept, / remembering Zion: / on the poplars
that grew there / we hung our harps. **R.**
2. For it was there that they asked us, / our
captors, for songs, / our oppressors, for joy. / ‘Sing
to us,’ they said, / ‘one of Zion’s songs.’ **R.**
3. O how could we sing / the song of
the Lord / on alien soil? / If I forget you,
Jerusalem, / let my right hand wither! **R.**
4. O let my tongue / cleave to my mouth / if I
remember you not, / if I prize not Jerusalem /
above all my joys! **R.**

SECOND READING

Eph 2: 4-10

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the
Ephesians.

When we were dead through sins, he brought us to life.

God loved us with so much love that he was
generous with his mercy: when we were dead
through our sins, he brought us to life with
Christ – it is through grace that you have been
saved – and raised us up with him and gave us a
place with him in heaven, in Christ Jesus.

This was to show for all ages to come, through
his goodness towards us in Christ Jesus, how
infinitely rich he is in grace. Because it is by
grace that you have been saved, through faith;
not by anything of your own, but by a gift from
God; not by anything that you have done, so
that nobody can claim the credit. We are God’s
work of art, created in Christ Jesus to live the
good life as from the beginning he has meant
us to live it.

■ **The word of the Lord.**

GOSPEL

Jn 12: 20-30

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

If a grain of wheat falls on the ground and dies, it yields a rich harvest.

Among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. These approached Philip, who came from Bethsaida in Galilee, and put this request to him, ‘Sir, we should like to see Jesus’. Philip went to tell Andrew, and Andrew and Philip together went to tell Jesus. Jesus replied to them:

‘Now the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. I tell you, most solemnly, unless a wheat grain falls on the ground and dies, it remains only a single grain; but if it dies, it yields a rich harvest. Anyone who loves his life loses it; anyone who hates his life in this world will keep it for the eternal life. If a man serves me, he must follow me, wherever I am, my servant will be there too. If anyone serves me, my Father will honour him. Now my soul is troubled. What shall I say: Father, save me from this hour? But it was for this very reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name!’

A voice came from heaven, ‘I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.’ People standing by, who heard this, said it was a clap of thunder; others said, ‘It was an angel speaking to him.’ Jesus answered, ‘It was not for my sake that this voice came, but for yours.

‘Now sentence is being passed on this world; now the prince of this world is to be overthrown. And when I am lifted up from the earth, I shall draw all to myself.’ By these words he indicated the kind of death he would die.

■ The Gospel of the Lord.

A SERVICE OF THE SOCIETY OF ST PAUL



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Breaking Open the Word



THE SAVING WORD

FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT / B

21 MARCH 2021

DYING IN ORDER TO LIVE

As Holy Week approaches, we are invited to enter more deeply into our own hearts and to accompany Jesus as he searches his heart in preparing to undergo his passion. The readings focus not only on the new life that we are offered, but also on the decisions that must be made to die to what is false within us so that God’s new life may grow and flourish within us.

Jeremiah spoke to his contemporaries about the new covenant that God wanted to plant in their hearts. He powerfully calls for a decision to renewal. Would they give God the space in which to plant a seed? Did they have the courage to leave their past behind and journey towards a new future?

In the second reading and the Gospel we see how Jesus also shared in our struggle to choose the life that comes from dying to self. In the letter to the Hebrews, we are presented with the image of Jesus as God’s Son who, like us, must search, struggle and pray so that the seed might grow and flourish. Some people may be disquieted by the image of Jesus having to come to perfection through struggle. It is a most precious gift – this is how seriously God takes it when God becomes one like us and shares in our humanity. In the gospel we see Jesus wrestling with this moment which is paradoxically the moment when he is already glorified. It is the moment of decision, when he must choose to become the living example of the seed that dies in order to live.

Christopher Monaghan CP

FIRST READING

Jer 31: 31-34

A reading from the prophet Jeremiah.

The days are coming when I will make a new covenant with Israel and I will forgive their iniquity.

See, the days are coming – it is the Lord who speaks – when I will make a new covenant with the House of Israel and the House of Judah, but not a covenant like the one I made with their ancestors on the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. They broke that covenant of mine, so I had to show them who was master. It is the Lord who speaks. No, this is the covenant I will make with the House of Israel when those days arrive – it is the Lord who speaks. Deep within them I will plant my Law, writing it on their hearts. Then I will be their God and they shall be my people. There will be no further need for neighbour to try to teach neighbour, or brother to say to brother, ‘Learn to know the Lord!’ No, they will all know me, the least no less than the greatest – it is the Lord who speaks – since I will forgive their iniquity and never call their sin to mind.

■ The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Ps 50: 3-4, 12-15. R. v. 12

R. Create a clean heart in me, O God.

1. Have mercy on me, God, in your kindness. / In your compassion blot out my offence. / O wash me more and more from my guilt / and cleanse me from my sin. **R.**

2. A pure heart create for me, O God, / put a steadfast spirit within me. / Do not cast me away from your presence, / nor deprive me of your holy spirit. **R.**

3. Give me again the joy of your help; / with a spirit of fervour sustain me, / that I may teach transgressors your ways / and sinners may return to you. **R.**



SECOND READING

Heb 5: 7-9

A reading from the letter to the Hebrews.

He learnt to obey and became for all the source of eternal salvation.

During his life on earth, Christ offered up prayer and entreaty, aloud and in silent tears, to the one who had the power to save him out of death, and he submitted so humbly that his prayer was heard. Although he was Son, he learnt to obey through suffering; but having been made perfect, he became for all who obey him the source of eternal salvation.

■ The word of the Lord.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Jn 12: 26

Glory to you, Word of God, Lord Jesus Christ! / If you serve me, follow me, says the Lord; / and where I am, my servant will also be. / Glory to you, Word of God, Lord Jesus Christ!

the uprising. When the crowd went up and began to ask Pilate the customary favour, Pilate answered them,

O. Do you want me to release for you the king of the Jews?

N. For he realised it was out of jealousy that the chief priests had handed Jesus over. The chief priests, however, had incited the crowd to demand that he should release Barabbas for them instead. Then Pilate spoke again,

O. But in that case, what am I to do with the man you call king of the Jews?

N. They shouted back,

C. Crucify him!

N. Pilate asked them,

O. Why? What harm has he done?

N. But they shouted all the louder,

C. Crucify him!

N. So Pilate, anxious to placate the crowd, released Barabbas for them and, having ordered Jesus to be scourged, handed him over to be crucified.

The soldiers led him away to the inner part of the palace, that is, the Praetorium, and called the whole cohort together. They dressed him up in purple, twisted some thorns into a crown and put it on him. And they began saluting him,

C. Hail, king of the Jews!

N. They struck his head with a reed and spat on him; and they went down on their knees to do him homage. And when they had finished making fun of him, they took

off the purple and dressed him in his own clothes.

They led him out to crucify him. They enlisted a passerby, Simon of Cyrene, father of Alexander and Rufus, who was coming in from the country, to carry his cross. They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha, which means the place of the skull.

They offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he refused it. Then they crucified him, and shared out his clothing, casting lots to decide what each should get. It was the third hour when they crucified him. The inscription giving the charge against him read: 'The King of the Jews.' And they crucified two robbers with him, one on his right and one on his left.

The passers-by jeered at him; they shook their heads and said,

C. Aha! So you would destroy the Temple and rebuild it in three days! Then save yourself: come down from the cross!

N. The chief priests and the scribes mocked him among themselves in the same way. They said,

C. He saved others, he cannot save himself. Let the Christ, the king of Israel,

come down from the cross now, for us to see it and believe.

N. Even those who were crucified with him taunted him.

When the sixth hour came there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice,

J. Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?

N. This means 'My God, my God, why have you deserted me?' When some of those who stood by heard this they said,

C. Listen, he is calling on Elijah.

N. Someone ran and soaked a sponge in vinegar and, putting it on a reed, gave it to him to drink saying,

O. Wait and see if Elijah will come to take him down.

N. But Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last.

All kneel and pause a moment

And the veil of the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The centurion, who was standing in front of him, had seen how he had died, and he said,

O. In truth this man was a son of God.

The longer form of this passion narrative may be read: Mk 14:1-15:47

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THE SAVING WORD

PALM SUNDAY OF THE PASSION OF THE LORD / B

28 MARCH 2021

FIRST READING Isa 50: 4-7
A reading from the prophet Isaiah

I did not cover my face against insult and I know I will not be ashamed.

The Lord has given me a disciple's tongue. So that I may know how to reply to the wearied, he provides me with speech. Each morning he wakes me to hear, to listen like a disciple. The Lord has opened my ear. For my part, I made no resistance, neither did I turn away. I offered my back to those who struck me, my cheeks to those who tore at my beard; I did not cover my face against insult and spittle. The Lord comes to my help, so that I am untouched by the insults. So, too, I set my face like flint; I know I shall not be shamed.

■ **The word of the Lord.**

RESP PSALM

Ps 21: 8-9, 17-20, 23-24. R. v. 2

R. My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?

1. All who see me deride me. / They curl their lips, they toss their heads. / 'He trusted in the Lord, let him save him: / let him release him if this is his friend.' **R.**

2. Many dogs have surrounded me, / a band of the wicked beset me. / They tear holes in my hands and my feet, / I can count every one of my bones. **R.**

3. They divide my clothing among them. / They cast lots for my robe. / O Lord, do not leave me alone, / my strength, make haste to help me! **R.**

4. I will tell of your name to my brethren / and praise you where they are assembled. / 'You who fear the Lord give him praise; / all sons of Jacob, give him glory. / Revere him, Israel's sons.' **R.**

SECOND READING Phil 2: 6-11
A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Philippians
He humbled himself to become like us and God raised him on high.

His state was divine, yet Christ Jesus did not cling to his equality with God but emptied himself to assume the condition of a slave, and became as men are; and being as all men are, he was humbler yet, even to accepting death, death on a cross. But God raised him high and gave him the name which is above all other names so that all beings in the heavens, on earth and in the underworld, should bend the knee at the name of Jesus and that every tongue should acclaim Jesus Christ as Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

■ **The word of the Lord.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Phil 2: 8-9

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ, king of endless glory! / Christ became obedient for us even to

death, / dying on the cross. / Therefore God raised him on high / and gave him a name above all other names. / Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ, king of endless glory!

GOSPEL Mk 15: 1-39
(**N.** Narrator **J.** Jesus **O.** Other single speaker **C.** Crowd, or more than one other speaker)

N. The passion of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Mark.

N. First thing in the morning, the chief priests together with the elders and scribes, in short the whole Sanhedrin, had their plan ready. They had Jesus bound and took him away and handed him over to Pilate. Pilate questioned him, **O.** Are you the king of the Jews?

N. He answered,

J. It is you who say it.

N. And the chief priests brought many accusations against him. Pilate questioned him again,

O. Have you no reply at all? See how many accusations they are bringing against you!

N. But to Pilate's amazement, Jesus made no further reply.

At festival time Pilate used to release a prisoner for them, anyone they asked for. Now a man called Barabbas was then in prison with the rioters who had committed murder during

God had anointed him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and because God was with him, Jesus went about doing good and curing all who had fallen into the power of the devil. Now I, and those with me, can witness to everything he did throughout the countryside of Judaea and in Jerusalem itself: and also to the fact that they killed him by hanging him on a tree, yet three days afterwards God raised him to life and allowed him to be seen, not by the whole people but only by certain witnesses God had chosen beforehand. Now we are those witnesses – we have eaten and drunk with him after his resurrection from the dead – and he has ordered us to proclaim this to his people and to tell them that God has appointed him to judge everyone, alive or dead. It is to him that all the prophets bear this witness: that all who believe in Jesus will have their sins forgiven through his name.’

■ The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

(see opposite page)

SECOND READING Col 3: 1-4

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Colossians

Look for the things that are in heaven, where Christ is.

Since you have been brought back to true life with Christ, you must look for the things that are in heaven, where Christ is, sitting at God’s right hand. Let your thoughts be on heavenly things, not on the things that are on the earth, because you have died, and now the life you have is

hidden with Christ in God. But when Christ is revealed – and he is your life – you too will be revealed in all your glory with him.

■ The word of the Lord.

SEQUENCE

The sequence may be said or sung.

Christians, to the Paschal Victim offer sacrifice and praise. / The sheep are ransomed by the Lamb; / and Christ, the undefiled, / hath sinners to his Father reconciled. / Death with life contended; combat strangely ended! / Life’s own Champion, slain, yet lives to reign. / Tell us, Mary: say what thou didst see upon the way. / The tomb the Living did enclose; / I saw Christ’s glory as he rose! / The angels there attesting, / shroud with grave-clothes resting. / Christ, my hope, has risen: he goes before you into Galilee. / That Christ is truly risen from the dead we know. / Victorious king, thy mercy show!

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

1 Cor 5: 7-8

Alleluia, alleluia! / Christ has become our paschal sacrifice; / let us feast with joy in the Lord. / Alleluia!

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GOSPEL

Jn 20: 1-9

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

The teaching of scripture is that he must rise from the dead.

It was very early on the first day of the week and still dark, when Mary of Magdala came to the tomb. She saw that the stone had been moved away from the tomb and came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved. ‘They have taken the Lord out of the tomb’ she said ‘and we don’t know where they have put him.’

So Peter set out with the other disciple to go to the tomb. They ran together, but the other disciple, running faster than Peter, reached the tomb first; he bent down and saw the linen cloths lying on the ground, but did not go in. Simon Peter who was following now came up, went right into the tomb, saw the linen cloths on the ground, and also the cloth that had been over his head; this was not with the linen cloths but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple who had reached the tomb first also went in; he saw and he believed. Till this moment they had failed to understand the teaching of scripture, that he must rise from the dead.

■ The Gospel of the Lord.



EASTER SUNDAY / B

THE SAVING WORD

04 APRIL 2021

MASS OF EASTER NIGHT

EPISTLE

Rom 6: 3-11

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Romans.

Christ, having been raised from the dead, will never die again.

When we were baptised in Christ Jesus we were baptised in his death; in other words, when we were baptised we went into the tomb with him and joined him in death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the Father’s glory, we too might live a new life.

If in union with Christ we have imitated his death, we shall also imitate him in his resurrection. We must realise that our former selves have been crucified with him to destroy this sinful body and to free us from the slavery of sin. When a man dies, of course, he has finished with sin.

But we believe that having died with Christ we shall return to life with him: Christ, as we know, having been raised from the dead will never die again. Death has no power over him any more. When he died, he died, once for all, to sin, so his life now is life with God; and in that way, you too must consider yourselves to be dead to sin but alive for God in Christ Jesus.

■ The word of the Lord.



RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Ps 117: 1-2, 16-17, 22-23

R. Alleluia. Alleluia. Alleluia.

1. Give thanks to the Lord for he is good, / for his love has no end. / Let the sons of Israel say: / ‘His love has no end’. **R.**
2. The Lord’s right hand has triumphed; / his right hand raised me up. / I shall not die, I shall live / and recount his deeds. **R.**
3. The stone which the builders rejected / has become the cornerstone. / This is the work of the Lord, / a marvel in our eyes. **R.**

GOSPEL

Mk 16: 1-7

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark.

Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified, has risen.

When the sabbath was over, Mary of Magdala, Mary the mother of James, and Salome, bought spices with which to go and anoint him. And very

early in the morning on the first day of the week they went to the tomb, just as the sun was rising.

They had been saying to one another, ‘Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?’ But when they looked they could see that the stone – which was very big – had already been rolled back. On entering the tomb they saw a young man in a white robe seated on the right-hand side, and they were struck with amazement. But he said to them, ‘There is no need for alarm. You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified: he has risen, he is not here. See, here is the place where they laid him. But you must go and tell his disciples and Peter, “He is going before you to Galilee; it is there you will see him, just as he told you.”’

■ The Gospel of the Lord.

MASS DURING THE DAY

FIRST READING

Acts 10:34, 37-43

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles

We have eaten and drunk with him after his resurrection from the dead.

Peter addressed Cornelius and his household: ‘You must have heard about the recent happenings in Judaea: about Jesus of Nazareth and how he began in Galilee, after John had been preaching baptism.

‘As the Father sent me,
so am I sending you,’
After saying this he breathed on them and said:
‘Receive the Holy Spirit.
For those whose sins you forgive,
they are forgiven;
for those whose sins you retain,
they are retained.’

Thomas, called the Twin, who was one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. When the disciples said, ‘We have seen the Lord,’ he answered, ‘Unless I see the holes that the nails made in his hands and can put my finger into the holes they made, and unless I can put my hand into his side, I refuse to believe.’ Eight days later the disciples were in the house again and Thomas was with them. The doors were closed, but Jesus came in and stood among them. ‘Peace be with you,’ he said. Then he spoke to Thomas, ‘Put your finger here; look, here are my hands. Give me your hand; put it into my side. Doubt no longer but believe.’ Thomas replied, ‘My Lord and my God!’ Jesus said to him;

‘You believe because you can see me.

Happy are those who have not seen and yet believe.’

There were many other signs that Jesus worked and the disciples saw, but they are not recorded in this book. These are recorded so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing this you may have life through his name.

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Breaking Open the Word



THE SAVING WORD

SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER / B (DIVINE MERCY)

11 APRIL 2021

EXPERIENCING THE RISEN LORD

The picture of the early church which Luke paints for us is a striking one. Everything is shared in common and it seems that Luke is at pains to highlight the radical difference the encounter with Jesus Risen made in their lives. What must other people have thought about this new group in Jerusalem? One minute they were a rabble, a rudderless ship after their leader Jesus was killed. Now they were found united sharing their faith and their goods. They were now respected, and their leaders were fearlessly giving witness that Jesus was not dead but alive.

At times people look at the difference between the early church's experience and our experience and wonder why things seem to have gone off the boil. What keeps us from letting the new life of Easter change our lives? Part of the answer lies in our own hearts. We can be afraid of allowing Jesus to enter into our lives and change us so radically. As John knows all too well, it's not the world that is the biggest obstacle for the person of faith, it's our own heart and the defences we have established there! There is a journey that must be made that no one else can make for us. The witness of the other disciples cannot substitute for Thomas his own experience of Jesus as the Risen One. When Jesus stands before him there is no more need for defences, no need to test what he knows to be true. Now, he too, can begin to live.

Christopher Monaghan CP

FIRST READING

Acts 4: 32-35

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

The whole group was united, heart and soul.

The whole group of believers was united, heart and soul; no one claimed for his own use anything that he had, as everything they owned was held in common.

The apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus with great power, and they were all given great respect.

None of their members was ever in want, as all those who owned land or houses would sell them, and bring the money from them, to present it to the apostles; it was then distributed to any members who might be in need.

■ The word of the Lord.

RESP PSALM

Ps 117: 2-4, 15-18, 22-24. R. v. 1

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

1. Let the sons of Israel say: / ‘His love has no end.’ / Let the sons of Aaron say: / ‘His love has no end.’ / Let those who fear the Lord say: / ‘His love has no end.’ **R.**

2. The Lord's right hand has triumphed; / his right hand raised me up. / I shall not die, I shall live / and recount his deeds. / I was punished, I was punished by the Lord, / but not doomed to die. **R.**

3. The stone which the builders rejected / has become the cornerstone. / This is the work of the Lord, / a marvel in our eyes. / This day was made by the Lord; / we rejoice and are glad. **R.**

SECOND READING

1 Jn 5: 1-6

A reading from the first letter of St John

Anyone begotten by God has already overcome the world.

Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ has been begotten by God; and whoever loves the Father that begot him loves the child whom he begets. We can be sure that we love God's children if we love God himself and do what



he has commanded us; this is what loving God is – keeping his commandments; and his commandments are not difficult, because anyone who has been begotten by God has already overcome the world; this is the victory over the world – our faith. Who can overcome the world? Only the man who believes that Jesus is the Son of God; Jesus Christ who came by water and blood, not with water only, but with water and blood; with the Spirit as another witness – since the Spirit is the truth.

■ The word of the Lord.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Jn 20: 29

Alleluia, alleluia! / You believe in me, Thomas, because you have seen me; / happy those who have not seen me, but still believe! / Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Jn 20: 19-31

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

After eight days, Jesus came in and stood among them.

In the evening of that same day, the first day of the week, the doors were closed in the room where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews. Jesus came and stood among them. He said to them, ‘Peace be with you,’ and showed them his hands and his side. The disciples were filled with joy when they saw the Lord, and he said to them again, ‘Peace be with you.

GOSPEL

Lk 24: 35-48

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

It is written that the Christ would suffer and on the third day rise from the dead.

The disciples told their story of what had happened on the road and how they had recognised Jesus at the breaking of bread.

They were still talking about all this when Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, 'Peace be with you!' In a state of alarm and fright, they thought they were seeing a ghost. But he said, 'Why are you so agitated, and why are these doubts rising in your hearts? Look at my hands and feet; yes, it is I indeed. Touch me and see for yourselves; a ghost has no flesh and bones as you can see I have.' And as he said this he showed them his hands and feet. Their joy was so great that they could not believe it, and they stood dumbfounded; so he said to them, 'Have you anything here to eat?' And they offered him a piece of grilled fish, which he took and ate before their eyes.

Then he told them, 'This is what I meant when I said, while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses, in the Prophets and in the Psalms, has to be fulfilled.' He then opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them: 'So you see how it is written that the Christ would suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that, in his name, repentance for the forgiveness of sins would be preached to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses to this.'

■ The Gospel of the Lord.

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Breaking Open the Word



THE SAVING WORD

THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER / B

18 APRIL 2021

THE CALL TO BE WITNESSES

Justice is often understood as fairness or even-handedness. The biblical tradition would not deny this but would tend to see justice as primarily about being in right relationship with God, oneself and others. Someone who is able to live in such a way would be seen to live in *shalom* (peace). On this Third Sunday of Easter these two dimensions are stressed. The first and second reading deal with Jesus as the just one who invites us to find and maintain balance in our relationships with God, ourselves and others. In the Gospel it is in relationship with the risen Jesus that we find true peace, as he leads us out of our fears and gives each one of us a new task – to be faithful and courageous witnesses.

Peter reaches out to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and re-opens the case for Jesus. He does not deny their mistake but states that since they acted in ignorance in killing Jesus the opportunity is still there for them to review their previous judgement and now accept Jesus as their saviour and come into right relationship with him. It is the Risen Lord who appears to the disciples and helps them to understand that even his brutal death was part of God's saving plan. Furthermore, his presence among them will lead them to overcome their fearful relationship to the world. A new relationship is called for since now they are given a new task, to be witnesses to the whole world.

Christopher Monaghan CP

FIRST READING

Acts 3: 13-15, 17-19

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

You killed the prince of life; God, however, raised him from the dead.

Peter said to the people: 'You are Israelites, and it is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our ancestors, who has glorified his servant Jesus, the same Jesus you handed over and then disowned in the presence of Pilate, after Pilate had decided to release him. It was you who accused the Holy One, the Just One, you who demanded the reprieve of a murderer while you killed the prince of life. God, however, raised him from the dead, and to that fact we are the witnesses.

'Now I know, brothers, that neither you nor your leaders had any idea what you were really doing; this was the way God carried out what he had foretold, when he said through all his prophets that his Christ would suffer. Now you must repent and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out.'

■ The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Ps 4: 2, 4, 7, 9. R. v. 7

R. Lord, let your face shine on us.

(or Alleluia!)

1. When I call, answer me, O God of justice; / from anguish you released me, have mercy and hear me! **R.**

2. It is the Lord who grants favours to those whom he loves; / the Lord hears me whenever I call him. **R.**

3. 'What can bring us happiness?' many say. / Lift up the light of your face on us, O Lord. **R.**

4. I will lie down in peace and sleep comes at once, / for you alone, Lord, make me dwell in safety. **R.**



SECOND READING

1 Jn 2: 1-5

A reading from the first letter of St John.

Jesus Christ is the sacrifice that takes away our sins and those of the whole world.

I am writing this, my children, to stop you sinning; but if anyone should sin, we have our advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, who is just; he is the sacrifice that takes our sins away, and not only ours, but the whole world's. We can be sure that we know God only by keeping his commandments. Anyone who says, 'I know him', and does not keep his commandments, is a liar, refusing to admit the truth. But when anyone does obey what he has said, God's love comes to perfection in him.

■ The word of the Lord.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

cf. Lk 24: 32

Alleluia, alleluia! / Lord Jesus, make your word plain to us: / make our hearts burn with love when you speak. / Alleluia!

and the sheep do not belong to him,
abandons the sheep and runs away
as soon as he sees a wolf coming,
and then the wolf attacks and scatters the
sheep;

this is because he is only a hired man
and has no concern for the sheep.

I am the good shepherd;

I know my own

and my own know me,

just as the Father knows me

and I know the Father;

and I lay down my life for my sheep.

And there are other sheep I have

that are not of this fold,

and these I have to lead as well.

They too will listen to my voice,

and there will be only one flock

and one shepherd.

The Father loves me,

because I lay down my life

in order to take it up again.

No one takes it from me;

I lay it down of my own free will,

and as it is in my power to lay it down,

so it is in my power to take it up again;

and this is the command I have been given
by my Father.'

■ The Gospel of the Lord.



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Breaking Open the Word



THE SAVING WORD

FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER / B (ANZAC DAY)

25 APRIL 2021

GOD'S MYSTERIOUS WAYS

There are always different ways of seeing the same thing. For some of the Jews in Jerusalem, Jesus' death was the necessary outcome for someone who was leading the people astray. Peter on the other hand has come to see it as the foundation and cornerstone of a new building. He does not deny that Jesus was rejected by some of his own, but he has come to appreciate it from a new point of view. As John expresses it, it is the means by which God lavishes us with love ushering in a new dawn for those with eyes to see.

In a similar fashion Jesus speaks to his disciples in the Gospel today about how he understands his own death. The disciples could only see their hopes of being part of a new kingdom being dashed to pieces, and as a failure. Jesus did not see his death in this way. Rather, it is the gift of the loving shepherd, given freely for his flock that they might live. On this Anzac Day we remember with profound thanks the sacrifice of so many who have served and died so that we might live.

Despite how things might appear there is always a deeper reality that the person of faith is called to see and appreciate. There is an invitation to hope and trust in the hidden and unexpected ways that God works in our midst. Even failures and suffering can have a part to play in God's plan for us. Having the openness to look once again with the eyes of faith is part of the challenge of Easter.

Christopher Monaghan CP

FIRST READING

Acts 4: 8-12

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

This is the only name by which we can be saved.

Filled with the Holy Spirit, Peter said: 'Rulers of the people, and elders! If you are questioning us today about an act of kindness to a cripple, and asking us how he was healed, then I am glad to tell you all, and would indeed be glad to tell the whole people of Israel, that it was by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, the one you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by this name and by no other that this man is able to stand up perfectly healthy, here in your presence today. This is the stone rejected by you the builders, but which has proved to be the keystone. For of all the names in the world given to men, this is the only one by which we can be saved.'

■ The word of the Lord.

RESP PS

Ps 117: 1, 8-9, 21-23, 26, 28-29. R. v. 22

R. The stone rejected by the builders has become the cornerstone. (or Alleluia!)

1. Give thanks to the Lord for he is good, / for his love has no end. / It is better to take refuge in the Lord / than to trust in men: / it is better to take refuge in the Lord / than to trust in princes. **R.**

2. I will thank you for you have given answer / and you are my saviour. / The stone which the builders rejected / has become the cornerstone. / This is the work of the Lord, / a marvel in our eyes. **R.**

3. Blessed in the name of the Lord / is he who comes. / We bless you from the house of the Lord; / I will thank you for you have given answer / and you are my saviour. / Give thanks to the Lord for he is good; / for his love has no end. **R.**



SECOND READING

1 Jn 3: 1-2

A reading from the first letter of St John.

We shall see God as he is.

Think of the love that the Father has lavished on us,

by letting us be called God's children;
and that is what we are.

Because the world refused to acknowledge him, therefore it does not acknowledge us.

My dear people, we are already the children of God

but what we are to be in the future has not yet been revealed;

all we know is, that when it is revealed we shall be like him

because we shall see him as he really is.

■ The word of the Lord.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Jn 10: 14

Alleluia, alleluia! / I am the good shepherd, says the Lord; / I know my sheep, and mine know me. / Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Jn 10: 11-18

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep.

Jesus said:

'I am the good shepherd:

the good shepherd is one who lays down his life for his sheep.

The hired man, since he is not the shepherd

GOSPEL

Jn 15: 1-8

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

All who live in me, and I in them, bear much fruit.

Jesus said to his disciples:

‘I am the true vine,
and my Father is the vinedresser.
Every branch in me that bears no fruit
he cuts away,
and every branch that does bear fruit he
prunes
to make it bear even more.
You are pruned already,
by means of the word that I have spoken to
you.
Make your home in me, as I make mine in you.
As a branch cannot bear fruit all by itself,
but must remain part of the vine,
neither can you unless you remain in me.
I am the vine,
you are the branches.
Whoever remains in me, with me in him,
bears fruit in plenty;
for cut off from me you can do nothing.
Anyone who does not remain in me
is like a branch that has been thrown away
– he withers;
these branches are collected and thrown on
the fire,
and they are burnt.
If you remain in me
and my words remain in you,
you may ask what you will
and you shall get it.
It is to the glory of my Father that you
should bear much fruit,
and then you will be my disciples.’

■ **The Gospel of the Lord.**

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Breaking Open the Word



FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER / B

THE SAVING WORD

02 MAY 2021

REMAINING IN JESUS' LOVE

Today's Gospel presents us with the image of the vine and the challenge to bear fruit in our Christian lives. There are some plants that are best left alone but a vine needs to be pruned, to cut away what is not essential so that it can produce a good and abundant crop. For Christians the implement of pruning is the word of Jesus which enters into our hearts and challenges us to take stock of our lives and values.

In the second reading John shares a simple and profound truth with us, that the business of bearing fruit requires more than good intentions and fine words. The new life of Easter is something we can all share in by our belief in Jesus and our love for one another. The principles are simple, and the difficulty has always been that of living our lives day by day open to the word of Jesus and the demands of love.

Six times the theme of remaining is mentioned in the gospel. It is clearly an important and difficult dimension of our bearing fruit as Christians. Remaining faithful to our promises and allowing Jesus' word to enter deeper into our hearts is a constant challenge but the readings also encourage us not to lose heart. The example of Paul in the first reading shows how the Lord can enter into the hardest heart and can turn a feared persecutor into a fearless preacher of the word. Even gnarled vines can bear abundant fruit.

Christopher Monaghan CP

FIRST READING

Acts 9: 26-31

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

He explained how the Lord appeared to Saul and spoke to him on his journey.

When Saul got to Jerusalem he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him: they could not believe he was really a disciple. Barnabas, however, took charge of him, introduced him to the apostles, and explained how the Lord had appeared to Saul and spoken to him on his journey, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. Saul now started to go round with them in Jerusalem, preaching fearlessly in the name of the Lord. But after he had spoken to the Hellenists, and argued with them, they became determined to kill him. When the brothers knew, they took him to Caesarea, and sent him off from there to Tarsus.

The churches throughout Judaea, Galilee and Samaria were now left in peace, building themselves up, living in the fear of the Lord, and filled with the consolation of the Holy Spirit.

■ **The word of the Lord.**

RESP PSALM

Ps 21: 26-28, 30-32. R. v. 26

R. I will praise you, Lord, in the assembly of your people. (or Alleluia!)

1. My vows I will pay before those who fear him. / The poor shall eat and shall have their fill. / They shall praise the Lord, those who seek him. / May their hearts live for ever and ever! **R.**

2. All the earth shall remember and return to the Lord, / all families of the nations worship before him. / They shall worship him, all the mighty of the earth; / before him shall bow all who go down to the dust. **R.**

3. And my soul shall live for him, my children serve him. / They shall tell of the Lord to generations yet to come, / declare his faithfulness to peoples yet unborn: / 'These things the Lord has done.' **R.**



SECOND READING

1 Jn 3: 18-24

A reading from the first letter of St John.

His commandments are these: that we believe and that we love one another.

My children, our love is not to be just words or mere talk, but something real and active; only by this can we be certain that we are the children of the truth and be able to quieten our conscience in his presence, whatever accusations it may raise against us, because God is greater than our conscience and he knows everything. My dear people, if we cannot be condemned by our conscience, we need not be afraid in God's presence, and whatever we ask him, we shall receive, because we keep his commandments and live the kind of life that he wants. His commandments are these: that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and that we love one another as he told us to. Whoever keeps his commandments lives in God and God lives in him. We know that he lives in us by the Spirit that he has given us.

■ **The word of the Lord.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Jn 15: 4-5

Alleluia, alleluia! / Live in me and let me live in you, says the Lord; / my branches bear much fruit. / Alleluia!