

FIRST READING – A EASTER 3

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

Pause – and look up at the assembly

When the day of Pentecost had come,
Peter, standing with the eleven,
raised his voice and addressed the crowd,
“Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem,
let this be known to you, and listen to what I say.
Jesus of Nazareth,
a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs
that God did through him among you, as you yourselves know –
this man, handed over to you
according to the definite plan and knowledge of God,
you crucified and killed by the hands of those outside the law.
But God raised him up, having freed him from death,
because it was impossible for him to be held in its power.
For David says concerning him,
‘I saw the Lord always before me,
for he is at my right hand so that I will not be shaken;
therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced;
moreover my flesh will live in hope.
For you will not abandon my soul to Hades,
or let your Holy One experience corruption.
You have made known to me the ways of life;
you will make me full of gladness with your presence.’”



Pause for **THREE** seconds
then look up at the people
and say SLOWLY:

The WORD of the LORD.

Thanks be to God.

SECOND READING – A EASTER 3

A reading from the first letter of Saint Peter.

Pause – and look up at the assembly

Beloved:

If you invoke as Father
the one who judges each person impartially
according to each one's deeds,
live in reverent fear during the time of your exile.
You know that you were ransomed
from the futile ways inherited from your ancestors,
not with perishable things like silver or gold,
but with the precious blood of Christ,
like that of a lamb without defect or blemish.
Christ was destined before the foundation of the world,
but was revealed at the end of the ages for your sake.
Through him you have come to trust in God,
who raised him from the dead and gave him glory,
so that your faith and hope are set on God.



Pause for **THREE** seconds
then look up at the people
and say SLOWLY:

The WORD of the LORD.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL READING – A EASTER 3

The Lord be with you.

And with your spirit.

A reading from the holy gospel according to Luke.

Glory to you, O Lord

On the first day of the week,
two of the disciples were going to a village called Emmaus,
about eleven kilometres from Jerusalem,
and talking with each other about all these things that had happened.
While they were talking and discussing,
Jesus himself came near and went with them,
but their eyes were kept from recognizing him.
And he said to them,
“What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?”
They stood still, looking sad.
Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him,
“Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem
who does not know the things
that have taken place there in these days?”
Jesus asked them, “What things?”
They replied, “The things about Jesus of Nazareth,
who was a prophet mighty in deed and word
before God and all the people,
and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over
to be condemned to death and crucified him.
But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.
Yes, and besides all this,
it is now the third day since these things took place.
Moreover, some women of our group astounded us.
They were at the tomb early this morning,
and when they did not find his body there,
they came back
and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels
who said that Jesus was alive.



GOSPEL READING [CTD.] – A EASTER 3

Some of those who were with us went to the tomb
and found it just as the women had said;
but they did not see him.”
Then he said to them,
“Oh, how foolish you are,
and how slow of heart to believe
all that the prophets have declared!
Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things
and then enter into his glory?”
Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets,
Jesus explained to them
the things about himself in all the Scriptures.
As they came near the village to which they were going,
Jesus walked ahead as if he were going on.
But they urged him strongly, saying,
“Stay with us, because it is almost evening
and the day is now nearly over.”
So he went in to stay with them.
When he was at the table with them,
he took bread, blessed and broke it,
and gave it to them.
Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him;
and he vanished from their sight.
They said to each other,
“Were not our hearts burning within us
while he was talking to us on the road,
while he was opening the Scriptures to us?”
That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem;
and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together.
These were saying,
“The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!”
Then they told what had happened on the road,
and how he had been made known to them
in the breaking of the bread.



SCRIPTURES IN DEPTH

Reading I: Acts 2:14, 22-33

This passage is part of the first kerygmatic speech in Acts, put into the mouth of Peter on the day of Pentecost. It prefaces the central events of the death and resurrection of Jesus with a brief summary of his earthly ministry and concludes with a proof text for the resurrection.

As the caption to the reading suggests, it is on this proof text that the emphasis should lie. It was not possible for Christ to be held by the powers of death.

Why not? Did his divinity give him an unfair advantage over us?

That is to ask the question the wrong way around. The divinity of Christ is rather a confession of faith that we make after being confronted with the story of his fate.

Christ could not be held by the power of death because in his cross he had overcome it.

Death, understood at the theological rather than the biological level, means a person's ultimate separation from God as the result of rebellion and consequent alienation.

Jesus had faced final separation from God in full obedience to his will right up to the end, and thereby he overcame separation from God. He could not be held by the pangs of death because he was what he was—but what he was did not involve some abstract quality of divinity that gave him unfair advantages over us, but his complete obedience to the will of God, which none of us has ever achieved.

The Resurrection did not snatch victory from the jaws of defeat or reverse the tragedy of the Cross like a *deus ex machina*. The Resurrection made manifest what was true of the Cross itself—that it was in fact the victory over human alienation and separation from God, over all that the New Testament means when it speaks of sin, the wrath of God, and death.

Responsorial Psalm 16:1-2, 5, 7-8, 9-10, 11 *

Quite fittingly, the responsorial psalm is the psalm from which the proof text in Peter's sermon in the first reading was taken.

Originally this psalm probably contained no hope of life after death, but was a thanksgiving for delivery from a plight near death. But as it passed into Christian usage, it acquired a much deeper meaning in the light of Christ's death and resurrection.

It is not really a proof text, for it does not prove the resurrection of Christ, but it does show that the God of the Old Testament is the same God who is finally revealed in the

resurrection of Jesus Christ, a God who rescues people from the power of death and opens up the path of life.

Reading II: 1 Peter 1:17-21

In this passage the paschal-baptismal associations of 1 Peter again come out clearly. In the Christ-event we were “ransomed . . . with the blood of the Lamb.” This primitive Christian language interprets the death of Christ in terms of the Passover.

The Passover lamb was not originally interpreted as a ransom for sin or a means of expiation, but it did acquire that meaning in later Judaism. It was this later interpretation of the Passover that gave the early Christians some of the language with which to speak of the significance of the death of Christ.

The language may be crude and cultic, but “ransom” does speak of the liberation that Christian experience has always known to be the consequence of Christ’s death (though we must not press it and ask to whom the ransom was paid; it must be left at the level of poetry and liturgy).

Again, “blood” speaks of the event of the cross, of Jesus’ total surrender of his will and life to the Father that was the means of that liberation.

Two consequences of this faith are spelled out for present behavior. At the beginning of the passage, the readers are told, “... live in reverent fear during the time of your exile.”

By shifting the metaphor from redemption from Egyptian bondage to a present existence in Babylonian exile, the writer damps down overenthusiastic claims about the consequences of our participation in Christ’s resurrection and insists on the “not yet” aspect of it.

We do belong to heaven, but we still have to live on earth meanwhile. Therefore “fear”—circumspection—must characterize the Christian life.

But there is a positive side of this “not-yet-ness,” too, which is picked up in the final verse of our reading: it is an existence characterized by confidence and hope—not hope that everything will turn out all right (the readers were due for the fiery trial of persecution anyhow), but the hope of final participation in the glory of Christ.

Gospel: Luke 24:13-35

This is the most beautiful of all the appearance stories, and it seems almost blasphemy for the critical scholar to lay hands upon it. Nevertheless, modern New Testament study shows that this story grew up through the years from an original nucleus and became the repository for theological ideas at various stages of development. Finally, Luke, with consummate literary skill, made it into a vivid narrative.

In its present form, the story reflects the pattern of early Christian worship. The self-manifestation of the risen One takes place through the two events of the exposition of the Scriptures and the breaking of the bread. These two events take place in every liturgy; word and sacrament are integral parts of a single coming of Christ to his own.

Over sixty years ago now, Karl Barth wrote in his Gifford Lectures the following words:

What we know today as the church service in Roman Catholicism and in Protestantism is a torso. The Roman Catholic Church has a sacramental service without preaching. But I wish to speak at the moment not for or against her, but about our own Protestant Church. We have a service with a sermon but without sacraments. Both types of service are impossible.

Barth would have to revise his words about Roman Catholicism today, but I wonder parenthetically whether many Protestants have paid sufficient heed to his words!

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