

THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER
April 18, 2021 B

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: *Holy Spirit, we thank you for gathering us together to share your Word. Fill us with the same fervor that empowered Peter to proclaim Jesus and his message. Just as you opened the eyes of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, open our eyes to recognize your holy presence in our midst. 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: In the first reading, Peter shows great courage in confronting the leaders and people for their role in the death of Jesus. In the second reading, John says that authentic love is shown by obedience to the commandments. In the Gospel, Luke shows that while the risen Christ is different (he comes through locked doors), he is also like the Christ whom the Apostles knew prior to the Resurrection. He has physical wounds and he eats food. All three readings show that belief in the Resurrection should lead to a repentance of sin.

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 3:13-15, 17-19

The Acts of the Apostles contains five speeches by Peter. Today's verses—an excerpt from his second speech—follow the healing of a crippled man which gives Peter a unique opportunity to preach about Jesus.

Peter begins by placing blame on his hearers and their leaders for the death of Jesus whom the God of their ancestors has now raised from the dead. But then, Peter tells his audience that they have acted out of ignorance, implying that had they known better, they would have acted accordingly. Now, through the witness of the disciples, they do know better and ought to reform their lives through repentance of sin and to come to believe in Jesus as the Messiah.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM 4

This psalm of lament expresses confidence in God's favor in time of trial, the kind of confidence Jesus must have had when faced with his sufferings.

SECOND READING: 1 John 2:1-5

Ideally, as Christians, we should not sin but if we do, we should be comforted by the fact that we have an advocate in Jesus who died for our sins. John states emphatically that true knowledge of Christ will lead one to keep the commandments. In stating this, John is responding to a widely held belief that a superior type of knowledge is sufficient for salvation and that such knowledge excuses one from adherence to moral norms.

PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL

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 24:35-48

This Gospel follows on the heels of the famous Emmaus story during which the two disciples experience Jesus in the breaking of the bread. As the two disciples describe their fascinating encounter with Jesus, he suddenly reappears to them. But they are scared and have no idea who he is. They think he is a ghost. Jesus tries to bring them to faith by appealing to their “sense of touch”: “*Look at my hands and feet,*” and to their reason: “*Ghosts have no flesh.*” Jesus opens their minds to their own writings in the law, the prophets and psalms, and how all of these point to his coming. Then the disciples are commissioned to go forth and be his witnesses: “*Penance and remission of sins must be preached to all nations.*”

FAITH SHARING QUESTIONS

1. Share with the group or person next to you what spoke to you most in the Gospel. With this first question, try to refrain from commenting on what others said. Just share what spoke to you and then move on to the next person.
2. Sin and repentance, and mercy are mentioned in today’s readings. What helps you to keep a balance between all three - awareness of our sinfulness our need to repent and the gift of God’s mercy? How are you challenged to do the same?
3. Even though the two disciples had just seen Jesus in the Emmaus event, they had no idea who he was when he appeared to them very shortly after that. What are we to make of that?
4. In the Gospel, Jesus offers the Apostles the gift of peace. How can you be an instrument of peace in your environment?
5. When are you most at peace? How can you bring peace to others?
6. Name 1 thing today’s Gospel says to us that we disciples of Jesus need to heed/act on.

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, like the two disciples I am sometimes slow or fearful or unable to truly trust that it is you performing miracles in my life. Please help me to trust you completely.

RESPONDING TO GOD’S WORD

Share with the person next to you one way you can act on this week’s readings. Suggestion: Be alert to opportunities for sharing your faith with others.

CONCLUDING PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING, PETITION AND INTERCESSION

Facilitator: What are we grateful for? For what and for whom do we need to pray? Pray for families who have children receiving First Communion during the Easter Season. Pray that this important event in the life of their child will move those who are lax about Church to return to the Eucharist on a regular basis.

CLOSING PRAYER (Together)

When Fearful

Lord, we ask you to deliver us from fear
of the unknown future:
from fear of failure; from fear of poverty;
from fear of bereavement;
from fear of loneliness;
from fear of sickness and pain;
from fear of age; and from fear of death.

Help us, Father, by your grace
to love you above all, and to fear nothing.

Fill our hearts with cheerful courage
and loving trust in you;
Through our Lord and Master,
Jesus Christ. Amen.

From *Treasury of Prayers* by Father Eamon Tobin