

# EASTER SUNDAY

April 12, 2020 A, B, C

**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:** *O Light of Lights, Risen Jesus, enter our hearts with your Good News. Enlighten our minds to understand that you have overcome death by your own dying and rising. Melt our frozen hearts with this Easter fire, that in our hearts of flesh we might come to believe that you forgive even our sins. Help us to see your presence everywhere as the first light of dawn beams upon our clouded vision. O Radiant Light, be in our midst as we gather to more clearly hear your Word of Life. 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:** All three readings focus on Jesus' Resurrection from the dead and its meaning for our lives. In the first reading from Acts, Peter states that all who come to believe in the Risen Christ will have their sins forgiven. In both of the alternative second readings, Paul stresses the moral dimension of the Resurrection. In the Gospel, Peter and John go on an 'Easter jog' to the tomb. Even though Peter gets there first, John is the first to believe that Christ is risen.

*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 10:34, 37-43

This is an excerpt from the last of several sermons of Peter found in Acts. What makes this sermon unique is that it comes right after the vision Peter has during which God reveals that Jesus has come not only to offer salvation to the Jews, but also to the Gentiles – to all people.

In this sermon, we hear about the scope and spread of the Gospel. The story of Jesus' baptism, his public ministry, death and Resurrection has been reported all over the land. The power of Jesus' ministry flows from him being anointed by God with the Holy Spirit. Peter lists himself as a witness to all these wondrous events. He concludes by stating that *all*—through faith and repentance—now have access to the salvation that Jesus has come to bring.

## RESPONSORIAL PSALM 118

This thanksgiving psalm is applied to all the great things God has done in Christ, especially raising him from the dead. *"This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad."*

## SECOND READING: Colossians 3:1-4; 1Corinthians 5:6-8

The two alternative second readings declare that the Resurrection is the foundation of new life for those who believe. In the Colossians reading, Paul reminds his readers that through baptism, they have died and have been raised up, and that they should live accordingly. In the Corinthians reading, Paul, using the imagery of yeast, states that because of our new life in Christ, we can make no accommodation to sin.

## PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL: John 20:1-9

*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: John 20:1-9

Mary Magdalene comes to the tomb while it is still dark (in John's Gospel, a symbol of unbelief). When she finds the tomb empty, she assumes the body has been stolen and runs to tell Peter and the 'other disciple' (whom scholars believe is John). They both race to the tomb. John wins the race and waits at the tomb for Peter to arrive. Peter goes into the tomb, but apparently does not know what to make of the strange sight of burial cloths lying by the tomb.

Then the other disciple enters the tomb and believes that Jesus has been risen from the dead. In John's Gospel, this is the first sign of resurrection faith. One may ask, how come Peter who sees the same evidence as John (an empty tomb, cloths lying on the ground) did not believe. Some scholars say it was the love in the Beloved's heart that helped him to *see* with faith eyes.

Commenting on the Gospel and the love in John's heart, Fr. Denis McBride, CSSR, writes: "*When Jesus stands unrecognized on the shore of Lake Tiberias, it is the beloved disciple who inform Peter: 'It is the Lord.'*" His is a love that got him there first."

(Used with permission granted by Denis McBride CSSR, *Seasons of the Word*)

## FAITH-SHARING QUESTIONS

1. Turn to the person next to you and share what verse or image in the readings caught your attention or drew you in. Was there a verse or aspect of the readings that challenged you?

*The facilitator can decide which is more helpful: to share the next questions with the whole group, or to share in smaller groups of three or four.*

2. Jesus' Resurrection is the gift of new life for all who open their hearts to him. What can keep us or others from opening our hearts fully to Jesus?

3. Easter is the victory of life over death, of light over darkness, of goodness over evil. Can you recall a Good Friday event in your life from which good and blessing came?

4. What are signs in our world and in my life that Jesus has triumphed over death?

5. Do you agree that "love in the heart can get us there first" – get us to see what we may miss without such love?

6. Name one thing today's Gospel says to us that we disciples of Jesus need to heed and act on.

## RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD

Share with the person next to you one way you can act on this week's readings. Suggestions: Seek to be more aware that God's plan is to always draw goodness out of the painful experiences of life. Seek to be an Easter presence for someone going through a Good Friday experience.

**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: *Risen Christ, fill my heart with your new life and alert me to ways I can share it with others.*

## CONCLUDE WITH PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING, PETITION AND INTERCESSION

**Facilitator:** Pray for those going through a Good Friday experience. Pray that you can be a sign of hope for people dealing with pain. Pray that our Risen Lord may touch the hearts of Catholics who only go to church at Easter, that they may be drawn back to the Lord's Table.

## CLOSING PRAYER (together)

*Blessed are you, Father,  
for raising your beloved Son Jesus  
from the dead and bringing us to faith  
in his saving death and Resurrection.*

*Give us a taste of the joy  
that filled the hearts of the first disciples,  
and help us to trust in the life  
that is promised through faith in him.  
We ask this in the name of Jesus the Lord.  
Amen.*