

# Third Sunday of Easter

## Year B



**FIRST READING**  
**Acts 3:13–15, 17–19**

**PSALM**  
**Psalm 4:2, 4, 7–9**

**SECOND READING**  
**1 John 2:1–5**

**GOSPEL**  
**Luke 24:35–48**

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### PRAYER

#### Psalm 4:2, 4, 7–9

Answer me when I call,  
O God of my right!  
You gave me room  
when I was in distress.  
Be gracious to me,  
and hear my prayer.  
But know that the LORD  
has set apart the faithful for himself;  
the LORD hears when I call to him.  
There are many who say,  
“O that we might see some good!  
Let the light of your face  
shine on us, O LORD!”  
You have put gladness in my heart  
more than when their grain  
and wine abound.  
I will both lie down  
and sleep in peace;  
for you alone, O LORD,  
make me lie down in safety.

### READING THE WORD

#### First Reading

**Acts 3:13–15, 17–19**

Peter said, “The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our ancestors has glorified his servant Jesus, whom you handed over and rejected in the presence of Pilate, though he had decided to release him. But you rejected the Holy and Righteous One

and asked to have a murderer given to you, and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses.”

“And now, friends, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. In this way God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, that his Messiah would suffer. Repent therefore, and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out.

#### Second Reading

**1 John 2:1–5**

My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

Now by this we may be sure that we know him, if we obey his commandments. Whoever says, “I have come to know him,” but does not obey his commandments, is a liar, and in such a person the truth does not exist; but whoever obeys his word, truly in this person the love of God has reached perfection.

#### Gospel

**Luke 24:35–48**

The two disciples told the others

what had happened on the road to Emmaus, and how Jesus had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread. While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.” They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. He said to them, “Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.” And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?” They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate in their presence.

Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.” Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.

## HEARING THE WORD

### “Understanding the Scriptures”

Human beings in general, and certainly Christians in particular, are constantly searching for a deeper understanding of the events that transpire in the world, the events that shape the lives and fates of individuals and communities. Jesus' death was an earth-shattering event for his followers. They could not move on with their lives until they were made to understand the meaning and significance of this tragic event. The same was true for the early converts to Christianity. The answers they all sought and needed were to be found in understanding the Scriptures.

The first reading from the book of Acts contains a short excerpt from Peter's speech to the crowd of Jewish worshipers gathered in the Temple. Peter delivered this speech right after he healed a lame beggar who sat at the Temple's entrance begging for money. Instead of money, Peter gave him back his health, “in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene” (Acts 3:6). This healing greatly puzzled the crowds, and their amazement provided Peter with a perfect occasion for an evangelizing speech.

In his speech Peter aimed at leading those who listened to a deeper comprehension of God's salvific plan for his people, Israel. He began by revealing the absurdity of rejecting Jesus, God's Holy One

and the Author of life, and handing him over to death at the hands of the Roman authorities represented by Pilate. Many of those who listened to Peter might have been in the crowd who called for Jesus' crucifixion. Yet, God glorified Jesus and raised him from the dead. In a paradoxical way, God carried out his plan of salvation through the horrific death of his Son on the cross. Yet, this tragic event was not accidental. In fact, it fulfilled what God had foretold through the prophets much earlier, namely, that God's Messiah would suffer.

After this introduction, Peter addressed his audience in a very direct manner laying the blame for Jesus' death on those who listened. In some measure he excused them for their crime pointing to their ignorance, “friends, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers”. While the past mistakes cannot be undone, their effects can be remedied. Peter points the way – “turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out”. Now that they have been made aware about God's purposes through Peter's appeal to the prophetic word, the people are called to turn their lives in the right direction. Their sin consisted in rejecting God's Messiah. Now that God proved that Jesus truly was the Messiah by raising him from the dead, they must turn to the one they have rejected to have their sins forgiven and receive the gift of salvation. The text in Acts continues noting numerous conver-

sions among those who listened to Peter (cf. Acts 4:4). The explanation of God's purposes as revealed in the Scriptures was Peter's chosen tool to bring many of God's opponents to become God's servants. It proved to be a very effective tool.

In the second reading, the author of the first letter of John tenderly addresses his faithful as “my little children”. As the “elder” of the community he writes the words of encouragement and guidance meant to keep the believers on the right path. His concern was to keep them away from sin. He saw sin as the power that leads to a life of darkness and deceit (cf. 1 John 1:8). The word of God expressed in the commandments prevents one from falling into sin and keeps every believer on the way towards perfection. For the author of this letter, the chief among the commandments is the commandment to love (cf. 1 John 2:7-11). Whoever lives in love obeys God's word, and, “truly in this person the love of God has reached perfection”.

But the possibility of going astray cannot be fully eliminated as human beings are inclined to sin. Realizing that, the author states that, “if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous”. The word “advocate”, *parakletos* in Greek, means “one called to a friend's side”. In ancient times, the “advocate” was a councillor for the defence in the court of

law. Using this image, the author presents Jesus, “the righteous”, as the advocate who defends and counsels a sinner. How does Jesus fulfil this role? According to the Gospel of John, the Holy Spirit is “another Advocate” (John 14:16-17) whom Jesus promised to send. The Spirit’s role was to remind the apostles about the words of Jesus (14:16). Thus, Jesus’ advocacy comes through his guiding words recorded in the Scriptures under the direction of the Holy Spirit. They are meant to keep the believers away from sin and judgment, or guide them towards repentance and forgiveness once the sin has occurred.

In the Gospel, Luke first narrates the testimony of the two disciples about the events on the road to Emmaus. The two recognized a mysterious companion who joined them on the road as the Risen Jesus during the breaking of the bread. Their story was interrupted by Jesus himself appearing in the midst of the eleven with his typical Easter greeting, “Peace be with you”.

The evangelist continues, describing the transformation of the disciples. Their first reaction to the presence of the Risen Lord was fear, “they were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost”. Jesus calms their fears by manifesting his wounds and proving that he is not a ghost by eating in front of them. All this proves that he is a real person, “flesh and bones”, a man whom they knew, who died, and who is now truly risen. The dis-

ciple’s reaction to this appearance was a mixture of joy and doubt, “in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering”. More was required for them to accept the truth of the resurrection. To convince them, Jesus appealed to the Scripture. Using “the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms” – that is the whole Scripture – he “opened their minds” to comprehend the purpose God had in allowing his Son and Messiah to die on the cross. Armed with such understanding, the disciples were entrusted with the mission of witnessing to God’s work of salvation before the whole world. It was not the physical experience of Jesus’ presence, but the insightful understanding of the Scriptures that enabled the disciples to become true witnesses.

The biblical readings of this third Easter Sunday clearly demonstrate how the Scripture serves as the key to unlock God’s mysteries and to understand God’s ways. The Scripture allows for the correct understanding of Jesus’ mission and the purpose of his death. The word of God directs the Christian life, steering it away from sin and towards repentance. Through his word, recorded in the Scripture, Jesus fulfils his role as the advocate who walks with his believers as a guide and who helps in their journey towards God. And, as the Gospel passage stressed, the right understanding of Scripture enables even doubting and frightened individuals to become courageous witnesses and heralds of salvation which God offers through

Jesus Christ to all humanity. Paraphrasing the words of the Psalmist we could say that through the Scripture the light of God’s face shines on us!

## **LISTENING TO THE WORD OF GOD**

The manual that comes with an electronic gadget affords users a better understanding of how the machine operates, how to use it, and tips on troubleshooting any problems. In a similar vein, the universe too has a Manual of Life to guide all who are born into the world. It is known as the Sacred Scriptures. As an inspired piece of work, the Scriptures give meaning to our earthly existence and serve as a compass to navigate our journey here on earth.

The death of Jesus Christ on a cross deeply shocked his disciples. It led to a crisis of faith. The disciples’ human reasoning could not provide any sensible explanation of what had happened. However, the Manual of Life, the Scriptures, held the key to unlock the mystery of the tragedy of the cross. Thus, when the resurrected Christ made his appearance to the disciples, he appealed to the Sacred Scriptures to open the minds of the disciples to understand what was written there, and to explain the meaning of his death. Peter did exactly the same in his address to the people of Jerusalem.

St. Jerome famously stated that, “Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ”. A

good grasp of the Word of God leads one to appreciate the salvific character of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The passion of Christ did not end salvation history but opened a new chapter. Hence, in the second reading, Jesus Christ is referred to as “the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the world.” Understandably, Peter preached to the crowd saying: “Repent therefore, and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out”.

Just like the early disciples of Christ who had to grapple with an event that shook their faith, many of us have questions needing answers. We often go through certain experiences of life that make us wonder whether God is really in charge of the universe. Just cast your eyes around and you would not lack examples: A mother loses her only child in an accident; a young boy prays for success in an exam and yet fails miserably. A young lady puts her trust in God, hoping to secure a job but she is woefully disappointed at the interview. Some have entered into relationships and marriages hoping for the best but were left by the roadside with broken hearts. In such moments, the silent cry of the heart is: Where is our God? Why this pain? Does God care? The world is unable to give appropriate answers to such questions. God alone is the best respondent to questions addressed to him, and his answers can be found in Sacred Scriptures. In the Word of God, we discover God’s

plan even in our brokenness.

The scattered pieces of our lives are akin to a jigsaw puzzle. They become meaningful in union with Christ. Like a mirror, the closer one looks at the Scriptures, the better one understands him/herself. Our personal struggles and challenges in life take on a new meaning when we come to the profound understanding that although suffering is very difficult, when embraced in faith, it leads one closer to the heart of God. There is a proverb which says: “God writes straight with crooked lines.” What appears to be a disappointment often turns out to be an appointment with God in the light of prayerful reflection on his Word. We have to allow for such encounters with God, faithfully reading and studying the Scriptures, the “Manual of Life” in order to live that life fully and meaningfully, because the Word of God is truly “a lamp unto our feet and a light for our path.”

## PROVERB

*“God writes straight  
with crooked lines.”*

## ACTION

### Self-examination:

How often do I read and meditate on the Word of God? To what degree are my thought-patterns and actions influenced and guided by the Scriptures?

### Response to God:

I choose to be conscious of the relationship I have with God in Christ. I choose to nourish this relationship by daily meditation on His Word.

### Response to your World:

In the course of this week I will choose and ponder at least one verse of the Bible each day.

As a group we first share about the role God’s Word plays in the life of each member. Then we decide on how we can reach out to those in need of guidance and direction in life through popularizing the Bible. This could be done by making known portions of the Scriptures through booklets or verbal sharing, or even by making the LectioYouth.Net initiative better known.

## PRAYER

*Eternal Father,  
your ways are perfect  
and nothing happens  
outside your divine will.  
By the light of the Holy Spirit  
teach us to understand your Word.  
Deepen our faith  
in your Son Jesus Christ,  
especially during dark moments  
and help us to hope  
for a day of resurrection  
whenever we find ourselves  
in any tomblike situation.  
Grant this  
through Christ our Lord.  
Amen.*