

Easter Sunday

Year C



FIRST READING
Acts 10:34, 37–43

PSALM
Psalm 118:1–2, 16–17, 22–23

SECOND READING
1 Corinthians 5:6–8

GOSPEL
Luke 24:13–35

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PRAYER

Psalm 118:1–2, 16–17, 22–23

O give thanks to the LORD,
for he is good;
his steadfast love endures forever!
Let Israel say,
“His steadfast love endures forever.”
the right hand of the LORD is exalted;
the right hand of the LORD
does valiantly.”
I shall not die, but I shall live,
and recount the deeds of the LORD.
The stone that the builders rejected
has become the chief cornerstone.
This is the LORD’s doing;
it is marvelous in our eyes.

READING THE WORD

First Reading

Acts 10:34, 37–43

Then Peter began to speak to them:
“I truly understand that God shows
no partiality.”
That message spread throughout
Judea, beginning in Galilee after the
baptism that John announced: how
God anointed Jesus of Nazareth
with the Holy Spirit and with power;
how he went about doing good
and healing all who were oppressed
by the devil, for God was with him.
We are witnesses to all that he did
both in Judea and in Jerusalem.
They put him to death by hanging
him on a tree; but God raised him
on the third day and allowed him to
appear, not to all the people but to
us who were chosen by God as witnesses,
and who ate and drank with
him after he rose from the dead.

He commanded us to preach to the
people and to testify that he is the
one ordained by God as judge of the
living and the dead. All the prophets
testify about him that everyone
who believes in him receives forgiveness
of sins through his name.”

Second Reading

1 Corinthians 5:6–8

Your boasting is not a good thing.
Do you not know that a little yeast
leavens the whole batch of dough?
Clean out the old yeast so that you
may be a new batch, as you really
are unleavened. For our paschal
lamb, Christ, has been sacrificed.
Therefore, let us celebrate the festival,
not with the old yeast, the yeast
of malice and evil, but with the
unleavened bread of sincerity and
truth.

Gospel

Luke 24:13–35

Now on that same day two of them
were going to a village called Emmaus,
about seven miles 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?” He

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 he was alive. 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 Messiah should suffer
these things and then enter into his
glory?” Then beginning with Moses
and all the prophets, he interpreted
to them the things about himself in
all the scriptures.

As they came near the village to
which they were going, he 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. They 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.

HEARING THE WORD

"Eating with the Risen Lord"

Easter Sunday celebrates the founding event of the Christian faith – the resurrection of Jesus. This greatest of God's miracles was so extraordinary that even Jesus' closest companions had great difficulties in believing it and accepting it. Surprisingly, it took the quite ordinary act of eating in the presence of the Risen Lord to convince them of the truth of the resurrection.

Peter's speech reported in the first reading was delivered in the household of a Gentile soldier, Cornelius. Upon realizing that it was God who brought him into the house of Cornelius, (cf. Acts 10:1-33), Peter understood that God intends his offer of salvation to extend beyond the people of Israel and include the Gentiles because, "God shows no partiality".

Peter's speech features three parts. He begins with a brief summary of Jesus' Galilean ministry, stating that Jesus did "good things" and liberated some

from the power of the devil. Peter concludes emphasizing that he and the other disciples were the eyewitnesses to these events. The second part of his speech contains the proclamation of Jesus's death and resurrection, expressed by a short but powerful formula, "they killed him, but God raised him". Here, Peter contrasts the work of Jesus' opponents with the work of God. The opponents attempted to destroy Jesus and put an end to his salvific work. God acted against their destructive work and raised Jesus from the dead. The struggle between death and life lies at the heart of Christianity, with the victory of life achieved through the resurrection of Jesus. Peter concluded this section affirming again that he and other apostles were the witnesses to Jesus' resurrection. However, to make his testimony absolutely credible Peter states that he and others "ate and drank" with the risen Jesus. This common meal confirms that the appearances of Jesus after his death were not illusions or hallucinations. These were encounters with a real person returning from the dead in a real, glorified body.

In the final part of his speech Peter explains that his apostolic work fulfils the Risen Lord's command to testify and proclaim that he is God's Messiah and the future judge of all humanity. Those hearing this proclamation are called to turn to Jesus for the forgiveness of sins so that they might be reconciled to God and

receive the Holy Spirit. This happened to Cornelius and his household in response to Peter's proclamation (Acts 10:44-48), which was so credible because it rested on his experience of eating with the risen Lord.

The second reading approaches the subject of the meal from another perspective. In this passage from 1 Corinthians, Paul deals with the problem of the immoral lifestyle of a community member, which was tolerated and even approved by others. Paul ordered the Corinthians to rise above their pride and to exclude the evildoer from their midst, in hope that he might repent (1 Cor 5:3-5). He justified this command appealing to the feasts of Passover and Unleavened Bread. For seven days following the Passover, the Jews ate only unleavened bread in commemoration of their hasty departure from Egypt during the Exodus. This was the feast of liberation and of a new beginning, which required removal of the old yeast so that the new bread could be made unpolluted. Paul applied this imagery to the Corinthians' situation. Jesus is their "Passover" – the liberator and the beginning of their new life as God's people. Therefore, they ought to live a new life unpolluted by their old ways. The immoral man acted like the old yeast threatening to pollute and corrupt the community's new life in Christ, the life nourished by the new bread who is the Risen Lord himself.

The Emmaus story demon-

strates how two confused disciples were transformed into the first credible witnesses to the resurrection. Surprisingly, these two did not belong to the group of the eleven apostles. There is a real possibility that they were husband and wife. One of them was Cleopas. John 19:25 names the wife of Cleopas (in Hebrew, "Clopas"), as one of the women under the cross. In this story, the two invited Jesus to "stay with us", and they ate a meal in their house, which suggest a family setting. Since Jesus had numerous disciples, many of them women, it is entirely possible that this married couple was among them.

When the women coming from the tomb declared that Jesus was raised from the dead, they were met with unbelief and even ridicule from the eleven apostles (cf. Luke 24:11). Like the apostles, the two disciples in the story were confused and disillusioned. The death of Jesus, whom they considered to be God's Messiah shattered their hopes. For them and for most other Jews, the Messiah was to be a glorious and powerful restorer of the nation, not a crucified and broken body hanging on the cross. They heard the stories about him being alive, but that confused them even more.

Meeting them on the road, Jesus first led them to understand the Messiah and his mission correctly. Yes, the Messiah was to be glorious, but the path to this glory led through suffering. Therefore, the Messiah had to die, but then be raised

and "enter into his glory". The proof of this is found in Scripture, which Jesus used as a means of explanation.

In the second step, Jesus proved to them that he has truly risen. In the course of a shared meal in the disciples' home, Jesus repeated his actions from the last supper taking the bread, blessing it, breaking it and giving it to them (Luke 22:19). This was the moment of revelation as the disciples recognized Jesus. During the last supper, sharing of the broken bread, Jesus pointed to his death. In Emmaus, sharing of the broken bread revealed him as the Risen Lord.

The Emmaus event transformed these two confused disciples into credible witnesses to the resurrection. They immediately returned to Jerusalem giving testimony that they encountered the Risen Jesus during their shared meal. Their surety regarding the resurrection rested on that experience, as will happen next for the rest of the disciples (cf. Luke 24:36-43). Christianity rests on the faith in Jesus' resurrection based on a convincing testimony of his disciples. The disciples' testimony, in turn, rests on the experience of the Risen Lord made convincing for them in the course of the meals they shared with him.

The Easter Sunday liturgy celebrates the resurrection of Jesus, and also encounters between the Risen Lord and his disciples. Without a credible testimony to the resurrection by these disciples Christianity would not have emerged. Peter

and the disciples in Emmaus were brought out of their confusion and unbelief through encountering Jesus at a meal. For this reason, the subsequent generations of Christians developed the liturgical Eucharistic meal which recalls the Last Supper but also the meals which transformed the doubting disciples into credible witnesses. Like the believers in Corinth, those who build their life on that testimony, and partake in the Eucharistic meals, nourish themselves with the new bread of life who is the Risen Lord himself. Those able to experience the power of the Risen Lord's presence in life and in the Eucharist can only say with the Psalmist, "this is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes."

LISTENING TO THE WORD OF GOD

Many think of Africa as the continent where many families and communities have little food to eat. Yet, even in places which struggle with food security, those who found themselves nearby would be kindly invited to share whatever is available. This shows how "eating with others" represents a much greater value than the quality or quantity of the food at the table. The Easter liturgy also presents us with examples of meals which had evangelizing and transforming value for those who experienced them.

In the first reading, Peter finds himself in the household of a Gentile soldier and his family. He was able

to share with them because he himself “ate and drank with Jesus after his resurrection from the dead”. That meal with the risen Lord convinced Peter that Jesus wants to be present in the Christian communities which unite Jews and Gentiles, foreign soldiers and fishermen, around a common table. There is no partiality in God who distributes the gifts of the Holy Spirit to all as he wants and when he wants. Today, Christian communities and households must likewise open their doors and welcome others, disregarding ethnic, cultural or religious borders that separate and divide.

The Corinthian community celebrated common meals where the newly baptized shared the table with other members of their new faith family. However, the immortal life of some of the established members who were, in fact, not worthy to “eat with the Risen Lord” was a source of scandal for those new members. However, their presence was tolerated by others. This went against all that Paul taught on the matter. As a Malinke proverb says: “the privilege of eating with elders belongs to children who know how to wash their hands”. Today, the Eucharist represents for us the privileged moments of “eating with the risen Lord”. By protesting against the wicked people of Corinth, Paul emphasized that the sacred meal serves to strengthen community ties and that each member must adjust their life to fit the demands of Christian

life. The same applies to our communities today. We may welcome sinners and strangers to our table, but the purpose of this hospitality is to help them to have “their hands clean” following our own example, and their fitting response to our invitation.

In the Gospel, we see Cleopas and his companion who had journeyed with an unknown traveler. The words of this stranger responded to their need for solace and consolation created by the crucifixion of their Lord. In most African cultures, at burials, all participants wash their hands and eat together in solidarity with the grieving family. The one who refuses to partake in such a meal could be suspected of ill intentions or even witchcraft. By agreeing to eat with Cleopas and his companion, the risen Lord showed concern and solidarity with the afflicted. It is in the breaking of bread that Jesus transformed an ordinary meal into a feast of faith. Today, we who “eat with the risen Lord” at our Eucharist have the same opportunity to experience the divine consolation and enlightenment, provided we approach this sacred meal with a clear conscience, seeking the presence of the Risen Lord.

PROVERB

*“The guest at dinner
improves
the family menu.”*

ACTION

Self-examination:

How do I approach and participate in the Eucharist? Is this a sacred meal for me? In what way?

Do I recognize the importance of sharing meals with others? Are these moments in any way experiences of community and companionship?

Response to God:

I will be attentive and responsive during the Eucharist, seeking to experience Jesus’ presence in the words and action that are taking place.

Response to your World:

I will organize a meal with someone who might need companionship and support.

We will invite a priest or other qualified person to our group to lead us to a deeper understanding of the Eucharist.

PRAYER

*God our Father,
we thank you for the Eucharist
that gives us the opportunity
to eat with the Risen Lord.
Help us to recognize him
in the darkness of our sadness
and in the midst of our struggles.
May our conduct
be a source of inspiration for others
and lead them to glorify you.
This we pray
through our Risen Lord Jesus.
Amen.*