

Third Sunday of Easter – April 18, 2021 Our Lady of Perpetual Help

Scripture Reading: ACTS 3:13-15, 17-19

Peter said to the people: "The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus, whom you handed over and denied in Pilate's presence when he had decided to release him.

You denied the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. The author of life you put to death, but God raised him from the dead; of this we are witnesses.

Now I know, brothers, that you acted out of ignorance, just as your leaders did; but God has thus brought to fulfillment what he had announced beforehand through the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer. Repent, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be wiped away."

Responsorial Psalm 4, 2. 7. 9

R. (7a) Lord, let your face shine on us.

When I call, answer me, O my just God, you who relieve me when I am in distress; have pity on me, and hear my prayer!

R. Lord, let your face shine on us.

Know that the LORD does wonders for his faithful one; the LORD will hear me when I call upon him.

R. Lord, let your face shine on us.

O LORD, let the light of your countenance shine upon us! You put gladness into my heart.

R. Lord, let your face shine on us.

As soon as I lie down, I fall peacefully asleep, for you alone, O LORD, bring security to my dwelling.

R. Lord, let your face shine on us.

Scripture Reading: 1 Jn 2, 1-5a

My children, I am writing this to you so that you may not commit sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous one.

He is expiation for our sins, and not for our sins only but for those of the whole world. The way we may be sure that we know him is to keep his commandments.

Those who say, "I know him," but do not keep his commandments are liars, and the truth is not in them. But whoever keeps his word, the love of God is truly perfected in him.

Gospel: LK 24, 35-48

The two disciples recounted what had taken place on the way, and how Jesus was made known to them in the breaking of bread.

While they were still speaking about this, he stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be with you." But they were startled and terrified and thought that they were seeing a ghost. Then he said to them, "Why are you troubled? And why do questions arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me and see, because a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you can see I have." And as he said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. While they were still incredulous for joy and were amazed, he asked them, "Have you anything here to eat?" They gave him a piece of baked fish; he took it and ate it in front of them.

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 and in the prophets and psalms must be fulfilled." Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. And he said to them, "Thus it is written that the Christ would suffer and rise from the dead on the third day and that repentance, for the forgiveness of sins, would be preached in his name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things."



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INVITATION TO PRAY

Pause for a few moments of silence and enter more deeply into the presens of God..

Proclaim the Scriptures out loud

As you listen to the scriptures be attentive to a Word, a phrase, a question, an image, or a feeling that emerges. Reflect on this quietly or share it aloud.

INVITATION TO REFLECT

Folks of a certain age will remember the Paul Harvey radio show called “The Rest of the Story.” Harvey always reserved until the last thing in his show a surprise ending to the story he had been reporting that week.

Well, Sunday’s Gospel contains the surprise ending to a tale we all know well, the Emmaus story. As you remember, two disciples, walking in sorrow to that small town, had been joined by a stranger who began explaining to them the story of Christ as foretold in the Jewish scriptures. When the three arrived at Emmaus they ate, and the men had known in a flash who this was—at the moment he broke the bread. They had run to Jerusalem as fast as they could, to tell the remaining apostles.

Then, this week’s Gospel contains “The Rest of the Story.” The two men were very excited, (though the account in Luke just says that they “recounted” what had happened). In the midst of their enthusiasm, suddenly, without warning, Jesus stood there in their midst. “They were startled and terrified and thought that they were seeing a ghost.” Jesus replies, ghosts do not have flesh and bones, now, do they? Touch me and know I am real. He shows them his hands and feet, with the wounds of the cross now gilded by God’s love. He says he is hungry; how much more un-ghostly could you get? He helps himself to the baked fish they bring him, just as he had done so often in their life together.

He begins to explain the events that had seemed like pure disaster to them: his passion and death. He opens for them everything written about him “in the law of Moses and in the prophets and psalms.” He explains why the Son of Man had needed to suffer, die, and be raised.

Surely he referenced the Book of Job to begin with: Job, who had been a loving and moral man, but had lost absolutely everything. This had led to a direct encounter with God. Maybe this story serves as a prefiguring of Jesus’ passion events. And of course, the Book of Isaiah must have been part of it:

It was our pain that he bore,
our sufferings he endured.
We thought of him as stricken,
struck down by God and afflicted,
But he was pierced for our sins,
crushed for our iniquity.
He bore the punishment that makes us whole,
by his wounds we were healed. (Isaiah 53:4-5)

This is the heart and soul of the Hebrew scriptures. Our Christian and Catholic belief holds that its fulfillment came in Jesus.

Including a hint at the resurrection:
Because of his anguish he shall see the light;
because of his knowledge he shall be content;
My servant, the just one, shall justify the many,
their iniquity he shall bear.

Therefore I will give him his portion among the many,
and he shall divide the spoils with the mighty. (Isaiah 53:11-12)

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And so the apostles are converted by “everything written about [Jesus] in the law of Moses and in the prophets and psalms.” Peter will go off preaching about what God “had announced beforehand through the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer” (First Reading) and die and would be glorified.

In other words, Peter and the others at last had learned the “rest of the story.”

And on Easter, so have we!

INVITATION TO GROUP SHARING

1. Is the point of this reading to lay blame for the suffering servant’s death, or to tell us that sin can be erased and the offenders can be raised to new life by the same power that raised Jesus to life?
2. John says in this reading that “(Christ) is expiation for our sins, and not for our sins only but for those of the whole world.” And Luke’s gospel (Gospel), “... that repentance, forgiveness of sins, would be preached in (Christ’s) name to all the nations.” From these statements would you guess that Christ came to save forty-four thousand people? Most people? All people?
3. He appeared in their midst. But why did Jesus say, “Peace be with you” to his disciples? What was the emotional atmosphere in the group at that time? Are there times in your life when you are distraught and you need some peace? Does it help you that Jesus has experienced trials like yours? Did God take our flesh because he needed to do so, or because it was us who needed him to?

INVITATION TO ACT

Determine a specific action (individual or group) that flows from your sharing. When choosing an individual action, determine what you will do and share it with the group. When choosing a group action, determine who will take responsibility for different aspects of the action. These should be your primary considerations.

CLOSING INVITATION TO PRAY

Give thanks to God (aloud or silently) for new insights, for desires awakened, for directions clarified, for the gift of one another’s openness and sensitivity. Conclude with the following:

Risen Lord, we come before you, grateful for the total gift of self that you have so freely given. This gift cost you greatly. Yet, you willingly gave so we might learn what it means to live a life truly in tune with the Father’s will and intention. We ask you to send forth the power of your Spirit, to strengthen us to be effective witnesses to your dying and rising. Help us to give without hesitation, even if it will cost us dearly. Help us to trust that all will work out well if we are faithful to witnessing what it means to be truly human, people full of dignity and great worth. We ask this through the power of your spirit. Amen.