

FIRST READING – A EASTER 2

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

Pause – and look up at the assembly

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship,
to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

Awe came upon everyone,

because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles.

All who believed were together and had all things in common;

they would sell their possessions and goods

and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need.

Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple,

they broke bread in various houses

and ate their food with glad and generous hearts,

praising God and having the goodwill of all the people.

And day by day the Lord added to their number

those who were being saved.

Pause for **THREE** seconds

then look up at the people

and say SLOWLY:



The WORD of the LORD.

Thanks be to God.

SECOND READING – A EASTER 2

A reading from the first letter of Saint Peter.

Pause - and look up at the assembly

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!
By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope
through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,
a birth into an inheritance
that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading,
kept in heaven for you,
who are being protected by the power of God through faith
for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.
In this you rejoice,
even if now for a little while
you have had to suffer various trials,
so that the genuineness of your faith
– being more precious than gold that,
though perishable, is tested by fire –
may be found to result in praise and glory and honour
when Jesus Christ is revealed.
Although you have not seen him, you love him;
and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him
and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy,
for you are receiving the outcome of your faith,
the salvation of your souls.

Pause for **THREE** seconds
then look up at the people
and say SLOWLY:



The WORD of the LORD.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL READING – A EASTER 2

The Lord be with you.

And with your spirit.

A reading from the holy gospel according to John.

Glory to you, O Lord

It was evening on the day Jesus rose from the dead,
the first day of the week,
and the doors of the house where the disciples had met
were locked for fear of the Jews.

Jesus came and stood among them and said,
“Peace be with you.”

After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side.
Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.

Jesus said to them again,
“Peace be with you.

As the Father has sent me, so I send you.”

When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them,
“Receive the Holy Spirit.

If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them;
if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”

But Thomas, who was called the Twin, one of the twelve,
was not with them when Jesus came.

So the other disciples told him,
“We have seen the Lord.”

But he said to them,
“Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands,
and put my finger in the mark of the nails
and my hand in his side,
I will not believe.”

A week later his disciples were again in the house,
and Thomas was with them.

Although the doors were shut,
Jesus came and stood among them and said,
“Peace be with you.”

Then he said to Thomas,
“Put your finger here and see my hands.
Reach out your hand and put it in my side.
Do not doubt but believe.”

Thomas answered him,
“My Lord and my God!”



GOSPEL READING [CTD.] – A EASTER 2

Jesus said to him,

“Have you believed because you have seen me?”

Blessed are those who have not seen
and yet have come to believe.”

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples,
which are not written in this book.

But these are written so that you may come to believe
that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God,
and that through believing you may have life in his name.



The GOSPEL of the LORD.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

SCRIPTURES IN DEPTH

Reading I: Acts 2:42-47

Readings from the Acts of the Apostles take the place of readings from the Old Testament during the Easter season in series A, B, and C. Such readings are appropriate because they show the continuing work of the risen Christ in his Church.

Luke, by defining his first volume as a record of all that Jesus began to do and to teach (Acts 1:1), implies that his second volume covers what Jesus continued to do and teach.

Verse 42 is a succinct characterization of the life of the apostolic church. Here we see the necessary signs of the presence of the church. Where these signs are, there the church is.

(1) The Apostles' Teaching. The sharp distinction between *didache* (teaching) and *kerygma* (preaching) was probably overdrawn.

Certainly the gospel has to be proclaimed in a different way to outsiders (see the kerygmatic speeches of Acts) from the way it is proclaimed in the ongoing life of the church. But the teaching here must include the continued preaching of the Gospel to the already existing church, a function that is necessary to keep the church in being as a church.

In the interest of such teaching, the sayings of Jesus and incidents from his life would have to be remembered and be given shape, and so the gospel tradition would gradually have evolved.

(2) Fellowship. The Greek word used in verse 42 is *koinonia*, which means common life, a shared life.

In the Christian community this is based on the sharing of the risen Christ's life with his people—what Paul in 2 Cor 13:14 calls the *koinonia* of the Spirit, and what the Johannine writer means when he speaks of his readers as having fellowship “with us,” that is, with those who have seen the risen Christ.

But this vertical dimension of *koinonia* produces a horizontal dimension. The early Christians, we are told, “had all things in common,” the so-called early Christian communism described in the ensuing verses.

Of course, such communism was not based on any economic doctrine but was a spontaneous expression of Christian *agape*, necessitated in any case by the removal of the Galilean fisherfolk to the capital.

Nor can it have been so general as Luke suggests in his idealized picture (“all who believed”), for when he speaks of Barnabas in 4:36-37, he seems to imply that there was something exceptional in what he did.

This shows that the so-called communism was not meant as law for the church for all time.

In Paul's churches it took the form of the collection for the Jerusalem church. Nonetheless, there must be some concrete expression of the horizontal dimension of *koinonia* as an essential mark of the church.

(3) **The Breaking of the Bread.** Scholars have debated whether this is a reference to the Eucharist or not.

If we mean the Eucharist as it later developed (by the time of Paul, for example, when the backward- and forward-looking elements combined), it would be an anachronism to call it such.

But verse 46 expands on the brief summary of verse 42 to show that this daily meal had a distinctly sacral character. There we read that they took their food "with glad and generous hearts."

The Greek word (*agalliasis*) represented by the English adjective "glad" is a noun meaning exuberant joy at the coming of the Messiah (so Bultmann).

This shows that the daily meal was an anticipation of the messianic banquet, a partial fulfillment of the Lord's promise at the Last Supper that he would eat and drink with his disciples in the consummated kingdom of God.

(4) **The Prayers.** This rather unspecific term probably refers to participation in the hours of prayer of Jewish devotion. It is curious to find the earliest Christians participating in the prayers of the Jewish Temple.

Stephen would later have something to say about that, and then the breach between Christianity and Judaism would be widened.

The observance of daily hours of prayer, originally a devout practice of individuals, was eventually developed into the monastic office. A private prayer life is clearly one of the marks of the Christian community.

One more comment. This summary does not mention baptism as one of the signs of the church's presence. There is an oblique reference to it in the final sentence of our reading: "And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved."

Baptism was the means by which this "addition" was effected. The phraseology tells us much about early Christian thinking on baptism.

Baptism is an act through which God works (note the "divine" passive), bringing the convert into an already existing community of those who are on the way to final salvation.

One does not become a member of the church as a result of individual decisions to get together after an individual experience of salvation.

Responsorial Psalm 118:2-4, 13-15, 22-24*

(This is a slightly different selection of verses from the same psalm that was used on Easter Sunday.)

Psalm 118, with its reference to the stone rejected and made the headstone of the comer, was perhaps the earliest psalm that the primitive community applied to the death and resurrection of Christ. It was the basic Old Testament text for the “no-yes” interpretation of the earliest kerygma.

Reading II: 1 Peter 1:3-9

It is widely believed among contemporary New Testament scholars that 1 Peter is based on an Easter baptismal homily. Some even think that it is a baptismal liturgy, but that is probably going a little too far.

Through their baptismal identification with Christ’s death and resurrection, Christians have experienced a new birth. But the author warns his readers that this new life is not yet completely realized.

They are being guarded for a salvation to be revealed in the last time, and meanwhile they may have to face various trials and have their faith tested in the fire of persecution.

Speaking with apostolic authority, that is, as one whose faith is grounded on his having “seen” the risen Lord, the author distinguishes himself from his hearers, who depend for their faith on the eyewitness of others because they have “not seen.” This adumbrates a theme that is to be developed in the story of Thomas in the gospel that follows.

Gospel: John 20:19-31

This is the traditional Gospel of “Low” Sunday. The author is here wrestling with what became a real problem in the post-apostolic church: How could one believe in the risen Lord without the benefit of a resurrection appearance? The answer is that even seeing, as in the case of Thomas, is no guarantee of faith.

For Thomas, faith came by hearing the word of the risen One addressing him personally. For those who come after, faith comes through hearing the Word of God, through hearing the risen One speak through his apostolic messengers.

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