

## FIRST READING – B 6 EASTER

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

Pause – and look up at the assembly

On Peter's arrival,  
Cornelius, a centurion of the Italian cohort, met him,  
and falling at his feet, worshiped him.  
But Peter made him get up, saying,  
“Stand up; I am only a man.”  
Then Peter began to speak,  
“I truly understand that God shows no partiality,  
but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right  
is acceptable to him.”  
While Peter was still speaking,  
the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the word.  
The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astounded  
that the gift of the Holy Spirit  
had been poured out even on the Gentiles,  
for they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God.  
Then Peter said,  
“Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people  
who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?”  
So he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.  
Then they invited him to stay for several days.

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

The WORD of the LORD.

*Thanks be to God.*

## SECOND READING – B 6 EASTER

A reading from the first letter of Saint John.

Pause – and look up at the assembly

Beloved,  
let us love one another,  
because love is from God;  
everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.  
Whoever does not love does not know God,  
for God is love.  
God's love was revealed among us in this way:  
God sent his only-begotten Son into the world  
so that we might live through him.  
In this is love,  
not that we loved God but that he loved us  
and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins.



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

The WORD of the LORD.

*Thanks be to God.*

## GOSPEL READING – B 6 EASTER

The Lord be with you.

*And with your spirit.*

A reading from the holy gospel according to John.

*Glory to you, O Lord*

Jesus said to his disciples:

“As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you;  
abide in my love.

If you keep my commandments,  
you will abide in my love,  
just as I have kept my Father’s commandments  
and abide in his love.

I have said these things to you  
so that my joy may be in you,  
and that your joy may be complete.

This is my commandment,  
that you love one another as I have loved you.

No one has greater love than this,  
to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.

You are my friends if you do what I command you.

I do not call you servants any longer,  
because the servant does not know what the master is doing;  
but I have called you friends,

because I have made known to you everything  
that I have heard from my Father.

You did not choose me but I chose you.

And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last,  
so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name.

I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.”



The GOSPEL of the LORD.

*Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.*

## SCRIPTURES IN DEPTH

### **Reading I: Acts 10:25-26, 34-35, 44-48**

For the believer, the most important consequence of the resurrection is the gift of the Spirit.

Although the day of Pentecost is the primary celebration of the outpouring of the Spirit, the whole period of the fifty days includes this as one of its motifs, just as the fifty days in Judaism were a celebration of the enjoyment of the fruits of the Promised Land.

It is thus appropriate, especially in the latter part of the Easter season, that we begin to think of the work of the Spirit in the Church. The same shift of theme was still perceptible in the traditional Lectionary.

Luke presents the Cornelius episode as the decisive step in the launching of the Gentile mission. Its decisiveness is emphasized by the length and detail of the narrative in [chapter 10](#), of which today's reading forms the closing part, by the repetition of the story in full when Peter reports back to the Jerusalem church in [chapter 11](#), and by Peter's reference to the episode at the apostolic council in [chapter 15](#).

This emphasis is a clue to Luke's theology. Historically, the mission to the Gentiles is more likely to have begun, almost in a fit of absence of mind, by anonymous Hellenistic Jewish Christian missionaries of the Stephen party (see [Acts 11:19-20](#)).

Luke's interest is that every step forward in the Christian mission must have the sanction of the Jerusalem church (see his interpretation of Paul's first visit to Jerusalem in last Sunday's first reading).

Of course, Luke did not invent the Cornelius story—there is no need to doubt that Peter did convert a Gentile God-fearer. But this was not really the beginning of the Gentile mission, for Cornelius already had one foot in the Jewish camp. It is the significance of the event that Luke has blown up out of all recognition.

One striking feature of the story is that the Holy Spirit falls upon Cornelius and his companions *before* they are baptized. Usually, both in Acts and in the New Testament generally, the Spirit descends after baptism, with or without the laying on of hands. Luke's point is that the Spirit here takes a fresh initiative where the Church was too timid to follow. Hence this episode has been aptly called the "Pentecost of the Gentiles."

Why, then, would baptism still have to follow? What would have been the status of converts who had received the Spirit but who had not yet been baptized? The best answer to this question is that the Spirit has, in this unique instance, gone beyond the confines of the Church and bestowed its blessing on outsiders. They are then brought into the circle of the people of God through baptism. Normally one is brought into the Church and there receives the Spirit.

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### **Responsorial Psalm: 98:1, 2-3, 3-4**

Psalm 98 was one of the enthronement psalms, celebrating the victory of YHWH as manifested in the enthronement of Israel's king. Here in the Easter season we celebrate the victory—the resurrection—in which God triumphed over the powers of sin and death.

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## **Reading II: 1 John 4:7-10**

The Johannine author has been insisting over against his Gnostic opponents that the love of others is the acid test of the claim to “know” God. After a digression, the writer returns to this theme: Only the person who loves others “knows” God as the Gnostics claimed to know him. Then comes the tremendous statement that the reason for this is because “God is love.”

This affirmation is frequently repeated out of context, as though it were a general, self-evident truth. Sir Edwyn Hoskyns was fond of saying in his lectures that the statement “God is love” occurs in only one passage of the New Testament, and only after the “whole turmoil of the Epistle to the Romans.” That God is love is a confession of faith from those who have encountered the love of God in action in his Son Jesus Christ, not a philosophical presupposition.

So here, in this very passage, the Johannine author goes on at once to say that we know God to be love only because he has sent his Son into the world, and sent him to be the expiation for our sins. Only on those grounds—because of the incarnation and the atonement—do we affirm that God is love. It is not a general truth about the universe.

Hence we cannot ask, Why does a God of love allow this or that to happen? As Bultmann said of grace, God’s love is an event.

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## **Gospel: John 15:9-17**

The gospel reading widens our understanding of the theme of love, already broached in the second reading. We encounter the love of God in Christ because, first of all, the Father has loved the Son and the Son has loved the Father.

The word for “loved” in each case is in the aorist tense—that is to say, it refers to a single, concrete act. God loved the Son in calling him and sending him.

The evangelist is not speculating about the timeless love of the Father and the Son but is saying what happened. God called Jesus at his baptism and called him to a saving mission. The Son obeyed the Father and kept his commandments, that is to say, he concretely fulfilled the mission laid upon him; his obedience to the Father’s commandment was consummated in his death on the cross.

By his death Jesus has constituted the disciples as a society of “friends.” One might almost say that this is the Johannine doctrine of the Church as opposed to the institutional, organizational understanding of the Church that was gaining the upper hand at that time.

The disciples are friends, not first of one another, but of Jesus. Only because of that are they friends of one another. The life of this society is characterized by joy (Hoskyns: “the delightful merriment of Christians”), bearing fruit, that is, keeping the commandment of love.

All these things are the outcome of the death and resurrection of Christ and characterize the life of the Christian community.

Reginald H. Fuller