

FIRST READING – B EASTER SUNDAY

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

Pause – and look up at the assembly

Peter began to speak:

“You know the message that 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 exploited 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.”

PAUSE for **THREE** seconds

then look up at the people

and say SLOWLY:



The WORD of the LORD.

Thanks be to God.

SECOND READING (OPTION 1) – B EASTER SUNDAY

A reading from the letter of Saint Paul to the Colossians.

Pause – and look up at the assembly

Brothers and sisters:
If you have been raised with Christ,
seek the things that are above,
where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.
Set your minds on things that are above,
not on things that are on earth,
for you have died,
and your life is hidden with Christ in God.
When Christ who is your life is revealed,
then you also will be revealed with him in glory.



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

The WORD of the LORD.

Thanks be to God.

SECOND READING (OPTION 2) – B EASTER SUNDAY

A reading from the first letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians.

Pause – and look up at the assembly

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.

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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.

GOSPEL READING – B EASTER SUNDAY

The Lord be with you.

And with your spirit.

A reading from the holy gospel according to John.

Glory to you, O Lord

Early on the first day of the week,
while it was still dark,
Mary Magdalene came to the tomb
and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb.
So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple,
the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them,
“They have taken the Lord out of the tomb,
and we do not know where they have laid him.”
Then Peter and the other disciple set out
and went toward the tomb.
The two were running together,
but the other disciple outran Peter
and reached the tomb first.
He bent down to look in
and saw the linen wrappings lying there,
but he did not go in.
Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb.
He saw the linen wrappings lying there,
and the cloth that had been on Jesus’ head,
not lying with the linen wrappings
but rolled up in a place by itself.



GOSPEL READING (CTD.) – B EASTER SUNDAY

Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in,
and he saw and believed;
for as yet they did not understand the Scripture,
that he must rise from the dead.

Then the disciples returned to their homes.
But Mary Magdalene stood weeping outside the tomb.
As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb;
and she saw two angels in white,
sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying,
one at the head and the other at the feet.

They said to her,
“Woman, why are you weeping?”
She said to them,
“They have taken away my Lord,
and I do not know where they have laid him.”
When she had said this,
she turned around and saw Jesus standing there,
but she did not know that it was Jesus.

Jesus said to her,
“Woman, why are you weeping?
Whom are you looking for?”
Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him,
“Sir, if you have carried him away,
tell me where you have laid him,
and I will take him away.”

Jesus said to her, “Mary!”
She turned and said to him in Hebrew,
“Rabbouni!” which means Teacher.
Jesus said to her,
“Do not hold on to me,
because I have not yet ascended to the Father.
But go to my brothers and say to them,
‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father,
to my God and your God.’”
Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples,
“I have seen the Lord”;
and she told them that he had said these things to her.



SCRIPTURES IN DEPTH

The Easter Sunday Mass is not itself the paschal liturgy. That took place at the culmination of the Easter Vigil. Rather, this is the first of a series of Masses that belong to the great fifty days. In them we reflect upon the post-Easter revelations of the risen Christ and the fruits of our redemption in him. The readings are the same every year.

Reading I: Acts 10:34a, 37-43

New Testament scholars regard the “kerygmatic” speeches of the Acts of the Apostles, not as records of what was actually said by Peter or others on a particular occasion, but as samples of the “kerygma,” or basic message of the earliest Jerusalem church.

While Luke undoubtedly had a hand in giving them their present shape, they enshrine very early Christological patterns. This sermon, for example, contains the following points:

(1) The earthly ministry of Jesus, culminating in his death, met with Israel’s rejection of the proffered salvation. The word “tree” calls attention to the scandalous nature of Christ’s death: “Cursed is he who hangs on a tree” (Dt 21:23; see Gal 3:13)

(2) Christ’s resurrection was God’s vindication of Jesus and all that he had stood for, in face of his contemporaries’ rejection of it. This “no-yes” interpretation of Golgotha and Easter is characteristic of the earliest period.

(3) The apostles witness the events from the beginning of the earthly ministry through the post-resurrection appearances.

Note, too, the suggestion, present elsewhere, that the context of the resurrection appearances was, at least sometimes, a meal.

The roots of the Christian Eucharist lie not only in the Last Supper but in the meals that the risen Lord celebrated with his disciples after his resurrection.

Responsorial Psalm: 118:1-2, 16-7, 22-23

Psalm 118, with its reference to the stone rejected and made the headstone of the corner, 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 (First Alternate): Colossians 3:1-41

“If you have been raised with Christ” is a common turn of phrase. It means “If (and of course you are),” Colossians is more positive than Rom 6 (see the Easter Vigil service) that baptism includes both the dying and the rising with Christ.

But it still maintains two reservations: the resurrection with Christ has to be implemented by constant moral effort; it is a hidden reality that is not finally revealed until Christ's second coming.

Reading II (Second Alternate): 1 Corinthians 5:6b-8

As the Jewish housewife spring-cleaned before Passover to make sure that there was not a crumb of leavened bread left in the house, so Paul, in figurative language, urges the Christians of Corinth to purge the leaven of malice and evil so that they may celebrate the festival of Christ's sacrifice as the true paschal Lamb with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

This is the earliest reference we have to the Christian reinterpretation of the Passover. It may even indicate that 1 Corinthians was written with the feast in view.

Gospel: Luke 22:14 - 23:56 or 23:1-49

This text is a combination of two different traditions.

The one is the well-attested and reliable tradition that Mary Magdalene (other names are added in various forms of the tradition, but there is no consistency here) visited the grave of Jesus on Easter morning, found it empty, and reported the fact to the disciples.

The other, less attested tradition is of Peter's visit to the grave (see Lk 24:12). (In the earliest and strongly attested tradition, Peter was the recipient of the first appearance.)

To the less attested tradition John has added the race between Peter and the "other disciple," probably with a symbolic significance. The "other disciple" comes to faith in the resurrection through the mere sight of the empty tomb.

In the earlier tradition, however, the disciples come to faith in the resurrection through seeing the risen Lord.

OR

Gospel: Luke 24:1-12

None of the Gospels relates the actual resurrection, that is, the rising (or the raising by God) of Jesus from the dead.

There are two reasons for this: (1) no one was present to witness it; there were witnesses to the empty tomb and to the appearances, but these were the aftermath of the event, not the event itself; (2) resurrection is transformation into an entirely new mode of existence, not mere resuscitation to the old life as in the raisings of Jairus' daughter, the widow's son at Nain, and Lazarus.

The resurrection takes place at the point of intersection between this age and the age to come, between time and eternity. Only the this-side aspect of it (“He is not here”) is open to this-worldly observation.

Christ can only be revealed by God to the witnesses as already risen. So the gospel of the day gives us, not a narrative of the resurrection, but the witness of the empty tomb. In itself, an empty tomb is susceptible of diverse interpretations.

The true meaning of it—and here lies the real euangelion, the Easter message—is conveyed by the “two men ... in dazzling apparel” (angels, that is, communication from the beyond). “He ... has risen.”

The Church, believing this proclamation, can now proceed to baptize, to renew its baptismal vows, and to celebrate the paschal Eucharist, in all of which the past (Christ’s death and resurrection) is “co-celebrated,” that is, brought from the past into the present, and the future (the second coming of Christ) is anticipated. Marana tha!

OR

For Afternoon or Evening

Gospel: Luke 24:13-35

This is the most beautiful of all the appearance stories, and it seems almost blasphemy for the critical scholar to lay hands upon it. Nevertheless, modern New Testament study shows that this story grew up through the years from an original nucleus and became the repository for theological ideas at various stages of development. Finally, Luke, with consummate literary skill, made it into a vivid narrative.

In its present form, the story reflects the pattern of early Christian worship. The self-manifestation of the risen One takes place through the two events of the exposition of the Scriptures and the breaking of the bread. These two events take place in every liturgy; word and sacrament are integral parts of a single coming of Christ to his own.

Over thirty years ago, Karl Barth wrote in his Gifford Lectures the following words:

“What we know today as the church service in Roman Catholicism and in Protestantism is a torso. The Roman Catholic Church has a sacramental service without preaching. But I wish to speak at the moment not for or against her, but about our own Protestant Church. We have a service with a sermon but without sacraments. Both types of service are impossible.”

Barth would have to revise his words about Roman Catholicism today, but I wonder parenthetically whether Protestants have paid sufficient heed to his words!

Reginald H. Fuller