

SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

LECTIONARY #55

READING I Acts of the Apostles 8:5–8, 14–17

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles

Philip went down to the city of **Samaria**
and **proclaimed** the Christ to them.

With **one** accord, the crowds **paid attention** to what was said
by Philip

when they **heard** it and saw the **signs** he was doing.

For **unclean** spirits, **crying out** in a loud voice,

came out of many possessed people,

and many **paralyzed or crippled** people were **cured**.

There was **great joy** in that city.

Now when the apostles in **Jerusalem**

heard that Samaria **had accepted** the word of God,
they **sent them Peter and John**,

who went down and **prayed for them**,

that they might receive **the Holy Spirit**,

for it had **not** yet fallen upon any of them;

they had **only** been **baptized** in the name of the **Lord Jesus**.

Then they **laid hands** on them

and they **received the Holy Spirit**.

Proclaim in an informative tone as you read
about the early stages of Christianity.

Samaria = suh-MAYR-ee-uh

Build excitement in your voice as you proclaim
the growth in numbers who were baptized.

READING I

After Stephen was put to death, a severe persecution broke out, and all the followers of Jesus except the apostles scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. Among those scattered was Philip, one of the seven disciples chosen to assist in resolving the conflict between the Hebrew and Hellenist Christians. Neither the conflict nor the persecution destroyed the unity of the church and the spreading of the Gospel. When he leaves Jerusalem, Philip goes north to Samaria, a region of long animosity between Jews and Samaritans, where he proclaims

Jesus Christ. In spite of their many differences of belief and practice, both Jews and Samaritans hoped for an anointed one sent by God, as seen in the story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman when she asks the townspeople, "Could he possibly be the Messiah?" (John 4:29). Not only does Philip proclaim Jesus as the Christ, he also does signs, casting out unclean spirits and healing the lame, similar to the signs done both by Jesus and the apostles in Jerusalem. The ensuing joy of the Samaritans echoes that of others who also experience the power of the Gospel.

Peter and John, physical links with the Church in Jerusalem, are sent to Samaria where they pray that those baptized in Samaria would receive the Holy Spirit. Although elsewhere in the Acts of the Apostles, Baptism includes the gift of the Holy Spirit (e.g., 2:38; 11:16), the Samaritan baptism does not. It is not clear why there is this difference, but one reason may be the apostolic role of unifying distant communities with the Church in Jerusalem. When the apostles lay hands on the Samaritans, these new believers receive the Holy Spirit, the

For meditation and context:

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 66:1-3, 4-5, 6-7, 16, 20 (1)

R. Let all the earth cry out to God with joy.

or

R. Alleluia.

Shout joyfully to God, all the earth,
sing praise to the glory of his name;
proclaim his glorious praise.Say to God, "How tremendous are
your deeds!""Let all on earth worship and sing praise
to you,

sing praise to your name!"

Come and see the works of God,
his tremendous deeds among the children
of Adam.He has changed the sea into dry land;
through the river they passed on foot;
therefore let us rejoice in him.

He rules by his might forever.

Hear now, all you who fear God,
while I declare

what he has done for me.

Blessed be God who refused me not
my prayer or his kindness!

READING II 1 Peter 3:15-18

A reading from the first Letter of Saint Peter

Beloved:

Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts.**Always be ready to give an explanation**to anyone who asks you for a **reason** for your **hope**,but do it with **gentleness and reverence**,keeping your **conscience** clear,**so that**, when you are **maligned**,those who **defame** your good conduct in Christ
may **themselves** be put to **shame**.For it is **better** to **suffer** for doing **good**,if that be the **will of God**, than for doing **evil**.For Christ **also** suffered for sins once,the **righteous** for the sake of the **unrighteous**,that he might **lead** you to God.**Put** to death in the **flesh**,he was **brought to life** in the **Spirit**.St. Peter tells us how we are to act as
followers of Christ. Proclaim slowly with
clarity of purpose and with passion.divine presence that brings believers every-
where into communion.**READING II** The communities to whom
Peter writes "may have to
suffer through various trials" (1 Peter 1:6)
and "suffer because of righteousness"
(3:14). While his audience may naturally
react to having suffering unjustly inflicted
on them with anger and vengeance, Peter
advises a different response, centered
on Christ. They are to "sanctify Christ as
Lord." This means that they are to affirm
Christ's holiness, recognizing that he isboth sublimely majestic, apart from all that
is sinful, as well as personally involved in
acts of compassion and justice. With Christ
in their hearts, believers have a living,
vibrant explanation of the hope they main-
tain, even if they are maligned and
defamed. With Christ as the model for
responding to suffering without retaliation,
believers can offer their defense with clar-
ity and conviction. If they treat persecutors
with kindness, as did Christ, the persecu-
tors themselves will put them to shame.Peter had earlier told his audience that
suffering is sometimes a consequence ofdoing evil (2:20). In what sounds like a prov-
erb, he now states that suffering for doing
good, if it is God's will, is better than suffer-
ing for doing evil. As Peter had looked to
Christ as the source for hope, he again
turns to Christ, this time as the model for
those who suffer for doing good. Christ's
suffering and death, in accord with God's
will, was the necessary path to resurrec-
tion. Christ, once put to death in the flesh is
now alive in the spirit. He is the reason for
their hope.