

THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER

This reading consists of a rich and spirited proclamation by Peter to his fellow apostles. It's filled with his enthusiasm for the meaning of the work they are beginning to do.

Nazorean = naz-uh-REE-uhn

Slight pause between "man" and "commended."

Slight pause between "worked" and "through."

In quoting from King David, Peter lets David speak for himself and, therefore, for us.

LECTIONARY #46

READING I Acts of the Apostles 2:14, 22-33

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles

Then **Peter** stood up with the **Eleven**,
raised his **voice**, and **proclaimed**:

"You who are **Jews**, indeed **all** of you **staying** in **Jerusalem**.

Let **this** be **known** to you, and **listen** to my **words**.

You who are **Israelites**, **hear** these **words**.

Jesus the **Nazorean** was a **man commended** to you by **God**
with **mighty deeds**, **wonders**, and **signs**,
which **God worked** through him in your **midst**,
as **you yourselves know**.

This man, **delivered up** by the **set plan** and **foreknowledge** of **God**,
you **killed**, using **lawless men** to **crucify** him.

But **God** raised him **up**, **releasing** him from the **throes** of **death**,
because it was **impossible** for **him** to be **held** by it.

For **David** says of him:

*I saw the **Lord** ever **before** me,*

*with **him** at my **right hand** I shall **not** be **disturbed**.*

***Therefore** my **heart** has been **glad** and my **tongue** has **exulted**;
my **flesh**, **too**, will **dwell** in **hope**,*

*because you **will not abandon** my **soul** to the **netherworld**,
nor will you **suffer** your **holy one** to see **corruption**.*

*You have **made known** to me the **paths** of **life**;
you will **fill** me with **joy** in your **presence**.*

READING I Our first reading for this Third Sunday of Easter is part of a much longer speech attributed to Peter in the Acts of the Apostles. The setting is Jerusalem on the Jewish feast of Pentecost, also known as *Shavuot*, which occurs fifty days after the second day of Passover. Originally, this was a harvest festival, but by the first century, it included a commemoration of the giving of the Law on Sinai. Pentecost was one of three pilgrimage feasts in early Judaism, the other two being Passover and Tabernacles.

Luke, the author of the Acts of the Apostles, notes that the city was filled with "devout Jews from every nation" (Acts 2:5) and, when they heard the noise of the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus' disciples, they all gathered round, wanting to know what was going on. The wind and fire from heaven certainly would have attracted attention, but even more confusing was the fact that members of the crowd were able to understand the disciples in their own tongue. But others in the crowd mocked them, saying that they were drunk.

Therefore, in the first part of his speech, Peter is presented as defending his companions, arguing that they are not drunk at this early hour of the day. Rather, he explains that their condition should be understood in terms of an oracle of the prophet Joel, which he quotes somewhat differently: "I will pour out a portion of my spirit in those days, and they shall prophesy. And I will work wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below. . . . And it shall be that everyone shall be saved who calls on the name of the Lord" (Acts 2:18-19, 21; see Joel 3:1-5).

Slight pause between "descendants" and "upon."

The reading concludes with an emphatic statement of belief and purpose.

For meditation and context:

"My brothers, one can confidently say to you about the patriarch David that he died and was buried, and his tomb is in our midst to this day. But since he was a prophet and knew that God had sworn an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants upon his throne, he foresaw and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that neither was he abandoned to the netherworld nor did his flesh see corruption. God raised this Jesus; of this we are all witnesses. Exalted at the right hand of God, he received the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father and poured him forth, as you see and hear."

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 16:1–2, 5, 7–8, 9–10, 11 (11a)

R. Lord, you will show us the path of life.

or

R. Alleluia.

Keep me, O God, for in you I take refuge;
I say to the LORD, "My Lord are you."
O LORD, my allotted portion and my cup,
you it is who hold fast my lot.

I bless the LORD who counsels me;
even in the night my heart exhorts me.
I set the LORD ever before me;
with him at my right hand I shall not
be disturbed.

Therefore my heart is glad and my
soul rejoices,
my body, too, abides in confidence;
because you will not abandon my soul
to the netherworld,
nor will you suffer your faithful one to
undergo corruption.

You will show me the path to life,
abounding joy in your presence,
the delights at your right hand forever.

But today's reading focuses on the second part of Peter's speech. It begins with one of several kerygmatic statements—that is, brief initial proclamations of the good news about Jesus Christ, that are found throughout Acts of the Apostles (e.g., Acts 3:12–26; 4:8–12; 5:29–32; 10:34–43; 13:16–41). They often begin with a statement about Jesus' words and deeds followed by a proclamation of his death and resurrection. The kerygmatic statements in Acts of the Apostles are typically directed toward Jewish audiences, and they often include an exhortation to forgiveness of

sin. They have a somewhat accusatory tone, but the primary thing to notice is that the events described in this kerygmatic statement amount to a declaration that everything is under the power of God and in keeping with God's plan of salvation.

In the closing sections of this speech, Luke focuses on David, because he believed him to be the author of the Psalms and of this psalm in particular. However, today we would attribute a much more complex history of composition to the Psalms. Luke identifies David as a prophet who spoke in Jesus' name, when he com-

posed Psalm 16:8–10, and he sees these verses as testimony to Jesus' resurrection, in fulfillment of a promise made to David that God would make one of his descendants the king of the Jewish people to reign forever (see 2 Samuel 7:12–17). Thus, Peter also quotes Psalm 110:1 to say that Jesus, who was crucified, is this messiah-king, who now sits exalted on God's throne.

READING II Our second reading is taken from the First Letter of Peter, which was most likely not written by Peter but by a pseudonymous author in

Slight pause between "Father" and "him."

sojourning = SOH-jern-ing

"Reverence": This is the focal word in this passage. Reverence is foremost a form of care; Peter wants to endow the recipients of his letter with care.

Note the rhythm that concludes this reading, where a stressed element near the beginning of the phrase leads to stressed elements toward the end of the phrase.

TO KEEP IN MIND

Pause to break up separate thoughts, set apart significant statements, or indicate major shifts. Never pause in the middle of a thought. Your primary guide for pauses is punctuation.

AD 79–90, who wanted to extend Peter's memory and his teachings to future generations. Although we call this document a letter, it reads more like a homily on baptism and Christian living or as an exhortation to holiness.

This reading is preceded by statements about how believing Christians enjoy a new life that is lived in the hope of Christ's resurrection and how God protects them, sustaining them in faith for the time of their salvation. The author of this letter goes on to speak directly to his audience, acknowledging that they will suffer as their

READING II 1 Peter 1:17–21

A reading from the first Letter of Saint Peter

Beloved:

If you **invoke** as **Father him** who judges **impartially** according to each one's works, **conduct** yourselves with **reverence** during the **time** of your **sojourning**, **realizing** that you were **ransomed** from your **futile conduct**, **handed on** by your **ancestors**, **not** with **perishable things** like **silver** or **gold** but with the **precious blood** of **Christ** as of a **spotless unblemished lamb**.

He was **known** before the **foundation** of the **world** but **revealed** in the **final time** for **you**, who **through him** believe in **God** who **raised him** from the **dead** and **gave him glory**, so that your **faith** and **hope** are in **God**.

faith is tested, but will find joy in knowing Christ as their savior.

Now, at the beginning of our reading, we are reminded of the intimate relationship that we have as children of our God, who is called Father in the best and purest sense of the word. This is a God who judges justly and with mercy, and therefore is deserving of our reverence. The Greek word *phobos*, translated here as "reverence," can also mean "fear or dread." But "fear of God" is not a concept that resonates well with modern readers. Instead, "awe" might be a better word to use.

Reread that part of this reading with "awe of God" replacing "reverence." We are to act out of awe for our God, who is so intimately tied to our lives as to treat us as his own dear children.

To expand on the notion of the awe or reverence that is due to God, the author of 1 Peter wants us to know that we are ransomed by the "precious blood of Christ" from our old way of life that goes back generations. A ransom is something that is paid or agreed upon for the release of someone living in captivity. The Greek word *timios*, translated here as "precious," also

GOSPEL Luke 24:13–35

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke

That very day, the first **day** of the week,
two of Jesus' **disciples** were going
to a **village** seven miles from Jerusalem called **Emmaus**,
and they were **conversing** about all the things that
had occurred.

And it **happened** that while they were **conversing** and debating,
Jesus **himself** drew **near** and walked **with** them,
but their **eyes** were prevented from **recognizing** him.

He asked them,

"What are you **discussing** as you walk **along**?"

They **stopped**, looking downcast.

One of them, named **Cleopas**, said to him in **reply**,

"Are you the **only visitor** to Jerusalem
who does not **know** of the things
that have taken **place there** in these days?"

And he **replied** to them, "What **sort** of things?"

They said to him,

"The **things** that happened to **Jesus** the Nazarene,
who was a **prophet** mighty in **deed** and **word**
before **God** and all the **people**,
how our **chief priests** and rulers both **handed him over**
to a **sentence of death** and **crucified** him.

But we were **hoping** that he would be the **one** to redeem Israel;
and **besides** all this,

it is now the **third day** since this took **place**.

Some women from our group, however, have **astounded** us:

they were at the tomb **early** in the morning
and did not find his **body**;
they came **back** and reported

that they had **indeed seen** a vision of angels
who **announced** that he was **alive**. >>

A reading with great drama built into it. You can easily imagine it being filmed. The focus on the reading is recognition, specifically the time it takes Jesus' two disciples to recognize that he has been raised from the dead. The build-up of the narrative intensifies the excitement and joy of their recognition.

This phrase introduces the motif of recognition that guides the passage. Recognition is connected initially to seeing.

It's interesting that only one of these two disciples are named.

Note that "they" are speaking, both of them, even though it's one unified speech. The purpose of this description of Jesus' deeds and words is to build toward recognition.

Note "a vision of angels." Recognition and seeing are still urgently connected.

means "held in honor, esteemed, or especially dear." Jesus' blood is especially dear, because it is the blood of the Passover lamb, poured out for our salvation. Coupled with the ancient belief that blood was the life-force of all living beings, it is no small matter that it is given up for us. Moreover, this was part of God's plan from the beginning of time so that our "faith and hope are in God." We stand in awe!

GOSPEL This Gospel reading is the story of the disciples on the road to Emmaus. As Luke tells the story, this

encounter with the risen Christ takes place on the same day that Jesus was raised from the dead. We learn that two of Jesus' disciples are deep in conversation as they make their way to Emmaus, which is approximately seven miles from Jerusalem. The narrator notes that they appear sad or downcast and, when the risen Jesus joins them on the road, they do not recognize him.

As Jesus engages these two disciples in conversation, he prompts them to tell the story of what happened to him in Jerusalem. Their response reads like a credal formula, but noticeably absent is any

mention of the resurrection. This is at odds with what they reveal next, that news of the resurrection had been proclaimed to them earlier that day. Thus, the risen Jesus confronts them, calling them foolish and slow of heart and scolding them about not understanding the Scriptures that describe the necessity of Jesus' suffering and glorification. We do not know what texts Luke had in mind, but more important is the message that Jesus' death and resurrection were all part of God's plan from the start.

The last scene in this story explains how and why the eyes and hearts of these

After spending time with Jesus (whom they still don't recognize), these disciples have a desire for further fellowship with him. They are beginning to sense something different than seeing something.

In the breaking of the bread—the ritual that repeats the Passover when they last were in Jesus' company—there is recognition. Ritual reveals presence.

Confirmation of their recognition, repeated in the phrase "the breaking of bread," the message of this reading.

two disciples were finally opened. Having arrived at Emmaus, they invite Jesus to stay with them. At their evening meal, Jesus blessed, broke and shared the bread in much the same way he did at his last meal before his death. They remembered and were able to recognize Jesus for who he was. They also remembered how they felt when he was teaching them on their journey and how their hearts were set afire. Finally then, in the breaking of the bread, they complete their journey from unbelief to full faith. Certainly, this is cause for great joy. C.C.

"Then some of those with us went to the **tomb** and found things **just as** the women had **described**, but him they did not **see**."
 And he said to them, "**Oh**, how **foolish** you are! How slow of heart to believe **all** that the prophets **spoke**! Was it not **necessary** that the Christ should **suffer** these things and **enter** into his **glory**?"
 Then beginning with **Moses** and all the **prophets**, he **interpreted** to them what referred to him in all the **Scriptures**.
 As they **approached** the village to which they were **going**, he gave the **impression** that he was going on **farther**.
 But they **urged** him, "**Stay** with us, for it is **nearly evening** and the day is almost **over**."
 So he went in to **stay** with them.
 And it happened that, while he was **with** them at table, he took bread, said the **blessing**, **broke** it, and **gave** it to them.
 With **that** their eyes were **opened** and they **recognized** him, but he **vanished** from their **sight**.
 Then they **said** to each other,
 "Were not our **hearts** burning **within** us while he **spoke** to us on the **way** and opened the **Scriptures** to us?"
 So they set out at once and **returned** to Jerusalem where they found **gathered together** the eleven and those with them who were **saying**,
 "**The Lord** has truly been **raised** and has **appeared** to Simon!"
 Then the two recounted what had taken **place** on the **way** and how he was made **known** to them in the **breaking** of **bread**.