

SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER (SUNDAY OF DIVINE MERCY)

LECTONARY #44

READING I Acts of the Apostles 4:32-35

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles

The community of believers was of one heart and mind, and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they had everything in common.

With great power the apostles bore witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus,

and great favor was accorded them all.

There was no needy person among them, for those who owned property or houses would sell them, bring the proceeds of the sale,

and put them at the feet of the apostles,

and they were distributed to each according to need.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 118:2-4, 13-15, 22-24 (1)

R. Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love is everlasting.

or
R. Alleluia.

Let the house of Israel say,
"His mercy endures forever,"

Let the house of Aaron say,
"His mercy endures forever,"

Let those who fear the Lord say,
"His mercy endures forever,"

I was hard pressed and was falling,
but the Lord helped me.

My strength and my courage is the Lord,
and he has been my savior.

The joyful shout of victory

The early community is striving to live in a way that reflects Jesus' teachings.
The apostles, witnesses to the resurrected Jesus, are emboldened by the Holy Spirit to give testimony. So too is your proclamation of the Word of God!

For meditation and context:

READING I

Throughout the seven weeks of Easter on Sundays and weekdays, we hear from the Acts of the Apostles about the struggles and triumphs of the first followers of Christ. These readings describe how the apostles understood the significance of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection to transform the way they interacted with the world. Thus, over forty-nine days, we hear the central message of the Good News and how the early Church attempted to live it out from a post-resurrection view.

Today's account is the third description in Acts of the early community. The first description (1:13-14) described the community as the apostles with a few women and members of Jesus' family, all dedicated to prayer, while the second (2:42-47) expanded the ranks to those who adhered to the apostles' teaching, lived a communal life, and celebrated the liturgical life with prayers and breaking bread together. Following an account of the community at prayer and how it was filled with the Holy Spirit (4:24-31), today's reading introduces new elements to the communal life. Drawing

READING II 1 John 5:1-6

A reading from the first Letter of Saint John

Beloved:

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is begotten by God,

and everyone who loves the Father

loves also the one begotten by him.

In this way we know that we love the children of God when we love God and obey his commandments.

For the love of God is this,

that we keep his commandments.

And his commandments are not burdensome,

for whoever is begotten by God conquers the world. And the victory that conquers the world is our faith.

Who indeed is the victor over the world

but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

This is the one who came through water and blood,

Jesus Christ,

not by water alone, but by water and blood.

The Spirit is the one that testifies,

and the Spirit is truth.

"Beloved" is a term of endearment. Read it as such.

This reading mentions all three persons of the Trinity. Clearly distinguish which member of the Trinity is being spoken about.

Help the assembly hear the different voices—narrator, Jesus, the disciples, and Thomas.

Narrate Jesus' appearance with some

surprise; the doors were locked. Then, use a

tender tone as Jesus speaks peace to them.

Repeat the tone each time Jesus says this.

READING II

Similar to the prominent role of Acts of the Apostles

in the Easter season, 1 John also is heard

frequently throughout Easter Time. It pro-

vides the second reading for the second to

seventh Sundays of Easter, Year B.

1 John echoes themes from John's

Gospel in order to guide and help a strugg-

ling community. It is the first of three let-

ters sent by "the Elder" of a Johannine

community. As with other early Christian

communities, the Johannine community

struggled with disunity among its members

regarding practice and core beliefs. Three

Under the rubric of love, today's read-

ing touches upon all three issues by con-

necting belief in Christ with living out God's

love. The foundation of the Elder's argu-

ment is that whoever "believes that Jesus

is the Christ is begotten by God." This iden-

tity and belief leads to love for the Father

and the Son, which is demonstrated by

the believer's adherence to God's com-

mands. These commands are not a burden;

rather, they help believers overcome the

world. Finally, the Elder recalls the Gospel

witness that from Jesus' pierced side

flowed water and blood (John 19:34), with

to the secessionists.

brothers and sisters. In 1 John, the Elder

advises the community about how to relate

that the secessionists failed to love their

John's Gospel. Finally, the Elder complained

the command to love as articulated in

following the commandments, specifically

down from heaven. There was division over

son of Jesus was the Christ who came

secessionists denied that the historical per-

(people who left the community). The

position from a group of secessionists

issues divided the Elder's more orthodox

ing touches upon all three issues by con-

necting belief in Christ with living out God's

love. The foundation of the Elder's argu-

ment is that whoever "believes that Jesus

is the Son of God?" This identity and belief

leads to love for the Father and the Son,

which is demonstrated by the believer's

adherence to God's commands. These com-

mands are not a burden; rather, they help

believers overcome the world. Finally, the

Elder recalls the Gospel witness that from

Jesus' pierced side flowed water and blood

(John 19:34), with which the Johannine

community struggled with disunity among

Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be with you." When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. >>

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John

GOSPEL John 20:19-31

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the doors were locked, where the disciples were,

for fear of the Jews,

Jesus came and stood in their midst

and said to them, "Peace be with you."

When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. >>

Joy can be reflected in your words and on the countenance of your face.

Elongate "breathed." Let the word become similar to what it represents.

Pause before the next scene.

Use energy for the disciples' report to Thomas. Despite their testimony, he does not believe. Pause again for the scene change before Jesus' next appearance the next week.

Use energy for the disciples' report to Thomas. Despite their testimony, he does not believe. Pause again for the scene change before Jesus' next appearance the next week.

GOSPEL

the Spirit testifying to the truth of these things, echoing the witness of the Beloved Disciple in John 19:35.

If Easter's Gospel traced the movement from unbelief to belief for the Beloved Disciple and Peter, today's account presents a two-act sequel to the unresolved story of the disciple. The first act begins on Easter evening, implying that the events of the morning, Mary Magdalene's testimony, as well as Peter and the Beloved Disciple's experience at the tomb, have had minimal effect.

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." And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained." Thomas, called Didymus, one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples said to 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 into the nailmarks and put my hand into his side, I will not believe." Now a week later his disciples were again inside and Thomas was with them. Jesus came, although the doors were locked, and stood in their midst and said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands, and bring your hand and put it into my side, and do not be unbelieving, but believe." Thomas answered and said to him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Have you come to believe because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed." Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples that are not written in this book. But these are written that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that through this belief you may have life in his name.

Ignoring the laws of physics, Jesus appears to ten fearful disciples (minus Thomas), bestows peace, and shows them his hands and side, leading them to rejoice and come to faith. For them to bear witness, however, they need the gift of the Spirit. Thus, Jesus breathes on them and bestows the Spirit. Still part of John's hour (of the cross and resurrection), the Spirit-filled disciples can now be for the world as Jesus was for them. This Spirit-filled presence, which is essentially God's work, grounds their ministry to bring God's forgiveness for sins and try to uncover all sinfulness. The second act begins on that same evening when Thomas arrives. Having missed it all, Thomas is in the darkness of unfaith, which he will lay aside only if Jesus meets his conditions. About a week later, Jesus reappears, willing to meet the conditions, but also commanding Thomas to move past them. Thomas forgets his conditions and states his faith: "My Lord and my God!" Jesus' final comments describe two eras of faith: the journey to faith in the physical presence of the risen Jesus and the journey of faith in the absence of Jesus, which applies to all future generations. S.L.