

The Third Sunday of Easter - Year B - 19th April, 2015

The resurrection is more than just a past event or a ticket to life after death. It is a lived reality that has the potential to change us and our world, if we can only believe, open to the change it brings, and proclaim its life-giving power through our lives. This is the message of this week's Lectionary, and it is both joyful and challenging. The call to be witnesses to Christ is one of the most transforming messages we can receive, because it requires us to live, speak, think and act like Christ.

May the message and mission of Christ fill us and send us out as agents of God's grace, justice and love.

INTRODUCTIONS

For use by lectors, in order of service, parish bulletins and magazines

Acts 3 : 12-19

Peter and John discovered that the power of the risen Christ was at work through them, to heal as he had done. Peter explained this miracle, and called the people to repent and believe in the Messiah whom the Jews had miracle, and called the people to repent and believe in the Messiah whom the Jews had rejected.

1 John 3 : 1-7

We do not know what our life after death will be like. Our faith is that we shall see and know completely the Christ whom we follow here, and so we shall be like him. Therefore, we must here and now put away all sin.

Luke 24 : 36b-48

The appearances of the risen Jesus were always unexpected. This is Luke's end of the first Easter Day, and shows us Jesus still teaching his friends how the Scriptures were fulfilled in what had happened.

Click here to view the readings

http://bible.oremus.org/?show_adj=no&passages=Acts%203:%2012-19%0A%2BOR%0AMicah%204:%201-5%0Acw%20Psalm%204%0A1%20John%203:%201-7%0ALuke%2024:%2036b-48

COLLECTS OF THE DAY

Collect One

Almighty God,
who hast given thine only Son
to be unto us both a sacrifice for sin,
and also an ensample of godly life;
Give us grace that we may always
most thankfully receive that his inestimable benefit,
and also daily endeavour ourselves
to follow the blessed steps of his most holy life;
through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.

Collect Two

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Almighty Father,
who in your great mercy gladdened the disciples
with the sight of the risen Lord:
Give us such knowledge of his presence with us,
that we may be strengthened
and sustained by his risen life
and serve you continually in righteousness and truth;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Presider or deacon

In the flesh and bones of the risen Christ, the invisible God stands among us. Let us pray to God for the needs of all believers and of all peoples everywhere.

Deacon or other leader

For the holy churches in every place, and for the unity of all.

Glory and praise to you, O living God.

For this holy assembly and for all who gather in Christ.

Glory and praise to you, O living God.

For *NN* and all illumined by the light of Christ.

Glory and praise to you, O living God.

For *N* our bishop and the presbyters, the deacons and all who minister in Christ, and for all the holy people of God.

Glory and praise to you, O living God.

For the world and its leaders, our nation and its people.

Glory and praise to you, O living God.

For all those in danger and need, the sick, the suffering, and the oppressed, and for all the dead.

Glory and praise to you, O living God.

For ourselves, our families, and those we love.

Glory and praise to you, O living God.

Remembering *N* - *Parish saint* - and all the saints, let us offer ourselves and one another to the living God through Christ. **To you, O Lord.**

Presider

Blessed are you, O Lord our God, who sent Christ to suffer and rise from the dead. Hear our prayers which we offer through his presence, and proclaim forgiveness of sins to all nations; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

POST COMMUNION

Living God,
your Son made himself known to his disciples
in the breaking of bread.
Open the eyes of our faith,
that we may see him in all his redeeming work;
who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

PRAYERS

Mighty God,
in whom we know the power of redemption,
you stand among us in the shadows of our time.
As we move through every sorrow and trial of this life,
uphold us with knowledge of the final morning
when, in the glorious presence of your risen Son,
we will share in his resurrection,
redeemed and restored to the fullness of life
and forever freed to be your people. Amen.

Living God,
long ago, faithful women
proclaimed the good news
of Jesus' resurrection,
and the world was changed forever.
Teach us to keep faith with them,
that our witness may be as bold,
our love as deep,
and our faith as true. Amen.

Creator of the universe,
you made the world in beauty,
and restore all things in glory
through the victory of Jesus Christ.
We pray that, wherever your image is still disfigured
by poverty, sickness, selfishness, war and greed,
the new creation in Jesus Christ may appear in justice, love, and peace,
to the glory of your name. Amen.

O God, your Son remained with his disciples after his resurrection,
teaching them to love all people as neighbors.
As his disciples in this age,
we offer our prayers on behalf of the universe
in which we are privileged to live
and our neighbors with whom we share it...
...Open our hearts to your power moving
around us and between us and within us,
until your glory is revealed in our love of both friend and enemy,
in communities transformed by justice and compassion,

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and in the healing of all that is broken. Amen.

Holy God,
you have called us to follow in the way of your risen Son,
and to care for those who are our companions,
not only with words of comfort, but with acts of love.
Seeking to be true friends of all,
we offer our prayers on behalf of the church and the world...
...Guide us in the path of discipleship,
so that, as you have blessed us,
we may be a blessing for others,
bringing the promise of the kingdom near
by our words and deeds. Amen.

Sisters and brothers in Christ,
God invites us to bring our doubts and fears,
our joys and concerns, our petitions and praise,
and offer them for the earth and all its creatures...
...Receive these prayers, O God,
and transform us through them,
that we may have eyes to see and hearts to understand
not only what you do on our behalf,
but what you call us to do
so that your realm will come to fruition in glory. Amen.

Holy and righteous God,
you raised Christ from the dead
and glorified him at your right hand.
Let the words of scripture,
fulfilled in Jesus your Son,
burn within our hearts
and open our minds to recognize him
in the breaking of bread. Amen.

LECTIONARY NOTES 1

Acts 3:12-19:

- Anger - sometimes Peter sounds so accusatory to me, especially in his early preaching, as if still so fresh from losing Jesus as a daily physical presence in their midst, he's looking for someone to blame. He does make concession in verses 17-19.
- Peter's words are also interesting considering his own role in Jesus' trial and death. Do you think he's speaking to himself as much as to the crowd?
- This scene takes place just after Peter heals a crippled beggar. Healing was central to Jesus' ministry. How do Peter and Jesus differ in their style of healing?

Psalm 4:

- "how long" - the human cry against injustice, the human plea for God to intervene.

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- A theme of this psalm: God hears us. Sometimes we doubt this - wonder if God is listening. The psalmist, with his own doubts, is still sure in his heart that God hears and listens. Are you?

1 John 3:1-7:

- We are God's children. The author sticks with this theme throughout. More than creator and created, more than master and servant. We are parent and child, a relationship that communicates God's overflowing, unconditional love toward us.
- Verses 2 and 3 are traditionally used as part of funeral liturgies. What we will be has not yet been revealed. So much potential that is inside of us. What is the best you can imagine yourself being? What is God revealing you to be?
- "no one who abides in him sins; no one who sins has either seen him or known him." What do you think the author means by this? Obviously, Christians continue to sin. Do we not abide in God? Sin can but distance between us and God, I think, but does it keep us from seeing or knowing God? I think God can bridge even such gaps between us, and seeks to do so.

Luke 24:36b-48:

- Luke presents instead of just a doubting Thomas, a whole group of disciples who are frightened and terrified, which seems a likely scenario to me. What would it take to convince you that someone had risen from the dead?
- Jesus eating fish is a symbolic proof that he is alive and real - not just a spiritual appearance - eating symbolizes his human body appearance for Luke - that's why it is emphasized that Jesus was hungry and ate in their presence.
- "Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures." - I love this verse, and have a jealousy about it - what did Jesus say to them? I've always been a questioning, looking for answers sort of believer. Not a doubter, but a seeker. I'd like a Q and A session with Jesus like this.

LECTIONARY NOTES 2

REFLECTIONS ON THEME:

If there was ever any doubt that God expects the resurrection to have an impact on how we live, this week's Lectionary readings should lay it to rest. All of the readings are very clear that, because of God's work in our lives, we should live differently, and we should be witnesses to God's grace and love. The Acts reading describes how Peter, after healing the lame man at the Temple, bears witness to Christ and calls his listeners to turn back to God. The Psalm speaks about God's goodness to God's faithful ones, and exhorts people to turn back to God. John's letter teaches, in a clear and direct way, that following Christ has to change how we live, with sin no longer being welcome in our lives, and Christ's righteousness being the pattern by which we now live. Finally, in the Gospel reading from Luke, Jesus challenges his disciples, who are now witnessing him as the Risen One, to believe and to be witnesses that call others to repent and believe and find life in Christ. The implication this week is that, as all of these biblical witnesses teach, we are also called to become witnesses to Christ, changing our own lives to live as true Christ-followers and calling others to repent, believe and find life.

CONNECTING WITH LIFE:

GLOBAL APPLICATION: The task of witnessing to the resurrection, historically, has been one motive behind colonialism, Christian triumphalism and even Christian violence against people of other faiths. This is tragic and horrifying, since nothing could be further from the Gospel of peace and grace that Jesus lived and taught. Even today, in a mistaken belief that we are somehow "witnessing" to Christ, Christians have engaged in crusades against evolution, climate change, Islam, abortion, homosexuality and even social justice. Yet, the economic, political and social implications of the resurrection have largely been ignored. However, when we place the resurrection, and the teaching that accompanies it in the New Testament in the context of Jesus message of God's Reign, we see that the resurrection is far more than just a promise of life after death. Rather, it is a challenge to everything that brings death into our world, and a call for all people to live differently – in ways that bring life to others. This means that we, who seek to follow Christ, need to begin by repenting ourselves, as John directs, seeking to remove sin – whatever would bring injustice and death into our world – from our lives, while embodying the same grace and love that Jesus showed. Then, through Christ-like lives and words, we are able to call others to a new, loving, gracious and just way of being. The true power of the resurrection is felt not so much after death, but here and now when God's life is brought to all who are dying under oppression, poverty, persecution and hatred.

LOCAL APPLICATION: The resurrection is usually all about something we wait for. We may speak about receiving Christ's life now, but we tend to define that as simply a promise of everlasting life when we die. However, in every family, community and individual life, there is a longing to be fully alive – creative, contributing, filled with meaning and purpose, and connected with other people and with the earth. It is exactly this longing that Jesus' resurrection life fills. The promise of life after death only has meaning if we can know and experience something of the resurrection now – and we can when we allow Christ's message and mission to change us, shifting us away from behaviours and attitudes that bring pain, darkness and division into our neighbourhoods and communities, and moving us toward generosity, peace-making, inclusivity, service and advocacy for justice. Our calls for repentance must first be manifest in our own lives, and then we can challenge others to work for justice. The call for repentance is not about imposing some puritanical moral code on others, so much as it is about living in such a way that we bring life and love to others. And the call to believe in and follow Jesus is less about assenting to some intellectual ideas than about embodying in our own lives the message and mission of Christ. In this sense the resurrection and the Reign of God are really synonymous, and together, they are the heart of the Christian message and life.

ONLINE SERMON SOURCES

America - "[Remembering the Church's First First Communion.](#)" John R. Donahue, SJ, *America: The National Catholic Weekly*, Years ago Edward Schillebeeckx suggested that the appearances of www.churchnewsireland.org

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the risen Jesus brought to the disciples a profound experience of forgiveness. All the Gospels depict the flight of the disciples and the denial of Peter. Paul was changed from persecutor to apostle by the grace of the risen Christ, and James the brother of the Lord, who was not a follower of the earthly Jesus (Mk. 3:20; 6:1-6), became a leader of the Jerusalem church. The peace that the risen Jesus brought was a release from the shame and failure of Jesus' first followers, which transformed them into missionaries and martyrs.
http://www.americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article_id=2073

Messiah - Frederick Buechner Sermon Illustrations.

Acts 3:12-19 - Here is Frederick Buechner's excerpt called "Messiah" found in Wishful Thinking and reprinted in Beyond Words: WIE MAN'S MACHT, IST'S FALSCH is a crude German saying that means, freely translated, "Whatever people do, it turns out lousy." The Russians throw out the czars and end up with Stalin. The Americans free their slaves so they can move out into the world as paupers.

Or take the Jews. The nation that God chooses to be the hope of the world becomes the stooge of the world.

<http://frederickbuechner.com/content/weekly-sermon-illustration-messiah>

Serious Stories, the Rev. Dr. Randall Bush, Day 1

Luke 24:36b-48. Imagine that you're at a dinner party, standing by the fireplace with a small plate of hors d'oeuvres, when you mention to the people nearby that you'd like to talk about Easter. Imagine someone responding, "No, thank you, we are having a serious discussion about education

http://day1.org/3721-serious_stories

Folding Screens and Forgiveness, the Rev. Benjamin Anthony, Day 1

Luke 24:36b-48 - Forgiveness is difficult and intractably concrete. This difficulty and intractability mirror the violence and suffering that make forgiveness necessary. Frequently, our responses to either violence or forgiveness are eerily similar. They are protective responses: the building of walls before another assault can be launched or before the reparations of forgiveness can be undertaken.

http://day1.org/1248-folding_screens_and_forgiveness

CHILDREN

Worshipping with Children - Suggestions for hymns, readings and an idea of two for an address

<http://worshippingwithchildren.blogspot.co.uk/2012/03/year-b-third-sunday-of-easter-april-22.html>

Sermons4Kids -

<http://www.sermons4kids.com/>

HYMN SUGGESTIONS

Jesus! The Name High Over All
Jesus Stand Among Us
I Cannot Tell Why He Whom Angels Worship
O For A Thousand Tongues To Sing
Lord Of The Dance
Jesus, Lord, We Look To Thee
Father Forgive Us

www.churchnewsireland.org

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Because He Lives
Lord Jesus Christ (Living Lord)
Lifesong