

EASTER SUNDAY – 20 APRIL 2025



COLLECT

O God, who on this day,
through your Only Begotten Son,
have conquered death
and unlocked for us the path to eternity,
grant, we pray, that we who keep
the solemnity of the Lord's Resurrection
may, through the renewal brought by your Spirit,
rise up in the light of life.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

READINGS AND REFLECTIONS

The Sacred Easter Triduum which began on Holy Thursday evening ends on the evening of Easter Sunday. Today is also the first Sunday of the Easter Season which ends with Pentecost Sunday.

The fifty days from the Sunday of the Resurrection to Pentecost Sunday are celebrated in joy and exultation as one feast day, indeed as one 'great Sunday'. These are the days above all others in which the Alleluia is sung. The Sundays of this time of the year are considered to be Sundays of Easter... (GNLYC 22-24).

After all the energy and effort of the Easter Vigil, there is no room for weariness this morning. Excellent music and fine attention to the proclamation of the word of God are a necessity.

In the Easter season, the first reading is taken from the Acts of the Apostles, not the Old Testament. It witnesses to the life of the early Church in which the Spirit-filled reality of the resurrection is unfolded, first through Peter and then through Paul. The Gospel each week is taken from John.

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles

10:34, 37-43

Peter addressed Cornelius and his household: 'You must have heard about the recent happenings in Judaea; about Jesus of Nazareth and how he began in Galilee, after John had been preaching baptism. God had anointed him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and because God was with him, Jesus went about doing good and curing all who had fallen into the power of the devil. Now I, and those with me, can witness to everything he did throughout the countryside of Judaea and in Jerusalem itself: and also to the fact that they killed him by hanging him on a tree, yet three days afterwards God raised him to life and allowed him to be seen, not by the whole people but only by certain witnesses God had chosen beforehand. Now we are those witnesses - we have eaten and drunk with him after his resurrection from the dead - and he has ordered us to proclaim this to his people and to tell them that God has appointed him to judge everyone, alive or dead. It is to him that all the prophets bear this witness: that all who believe in Jesus will have their sins forgiven through his name.'

Responsorial Psalm Ps 117:1-2, 16-17, 22-23

R. This is the day the Lord has made;
let us rejoice and be glad.

or

R. Alleluia.

Give thanks to the Lord for he is good,
for his love has no end.
Let the sons of Israel say:
'His love has no end.' **R.**

The Lord's right hand has triumphed;
his right hand raised me up.
I shall not die, I shall live
and recount his deeds. **R.**

The stone which the builders rejected
has become the corner stone.
This is the work of the Lord,
a marvel in our eyes. **R.**

First Reading

The Acts of the Apostles is a continuation of the Gospel of Luke. It tells the story of the early Church where we see a wonderful widening of the circle: the message of Christ is meant for all nations. Luke's gospel ends with a final instruction from the risen Lord: In the name of the risen Lord, *repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be preached to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses to this...* (Lk 24:47-48). How this comes to pass is the subject matter of the Acts of the Apostles.

So here in this text, we see Peter preaching the resurrection not to the Jewish community but to the household of Cornelius, a pagan Roman centurion.

Peter's proclamation stands in stark contrast to the account of the resurrection that we will hear in the gospel. Here we have a direct, excited and forthright eye-witness account of Jesus' ministry, death and resurrection. All are called to believe in Jesus and have their sins forgiven.

Readers should engage confidently with the testimony of Peter and make it come alive for the hearers at Mass.

Responsorial Psalm

The responsorial psalm for the Mass of Easter Day (Psalm 117/118) is identical to the Alleluia of the Easter Vigil. Alleluias would make an excellent response this morning as well.

Verses from this psalm are also used next Sunday. On both days we hear the verse cited in the synoptic gospels, the Acts of the Apostles and the first letter of Peter: *The stone which the builders rejected has become the corner stone.* It speaks to the Paschal Mystery of Jesus' death and resurrection.

References to 'triumph', 'raising', and 'live' make it clear why the psalm has been chosen for Easter.

Obviously, the cantor/reader should proclaim the text with exultant joy, and the assembly should sing full-throated Alleluias.

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Colossians 3:1–4

Since you have been brought back to true life with Christ, you must look for the things that are in heaven, where Christ is, sitting at God's right hand. Let your thoughts be on heavenly things, not on the things that are on the earth, because you have died, and now the life you have is hidden with Christ in God. But when Christ is revealed – and he is your life – you too will be revealed in all your glory with him.

Alternative Second Reading

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the Corinthians 5:6–8

You must know how even a small amount of yeast is enough to leaven all the dough, so get rid of all the old yeast, and make yourselves into a completely new batch of bread, unleavened as you are meant to be. Christ, our Passover, has been sacrificed; let us celebrate the feast, by getting rid of all the old yeast of evil and wickedness, having only the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John 20:1–9

It was very early on the first day of the week and still dark, when Mary of Magdala came to the tomb. She saw that the stone had been moved away from the tomb and came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved. 'They have taken the Lord out of the tomb' she said 'and we don't know where they have put him.'

So Peter set out with the other disciple to go to the tomb. They ran together, but the other disciple, running faster than Peter, reached the tomb first; he bent down and saw the linen cloths lying on the ground, but did not go in. Simon Peter who was following now came up, went right into the tomb, saw the linen cloths on the ground, and also the cloth that had been over his head; this was not with the linen cloths but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple who had reached the tomb first also went in; he saw and he believed. Till this moment they had failed to understand the teaching of scripture, that he must rise from the dead.

Second Reading - Colossians

The first alternative for today's second reading contrasts heaven and earth. The previous chapter has referred to our baptism as a dying and rising with Christ. That is the context for understanding this passage. In our baptism we have come to new life with Christ as part of God's family.

The reading ends with the promise of glory with the risen Christ. The reader should try to evoke the radiance of the resurrection which all the baptised are called to share.

Second Reading – 1 Corinthians

The second alternative for today's second reading uses the image of yeast and bread baking. These days we would probably use the image of one rotten apple in a basket rather than 'old yeast'. However the bread reference and the mention of Christ our Passover has helpful eucharistic overtones. Easter and the Eucharist both call us to newness of heart. United with the risen Lord, we put aside the old ways of immorality and embrace sincerity and truth.

The image may not be obvious to the hearers. The reader should perhaps emphasise the '*completely new batch of bread.*'

Gospel

There is excitement. People are running. But at the centre of this story is the quiet enigma of an empty tomb. The setting is mysterious – very early, still dark. The very ambiguity invites us to wonder with the disciples what is going on.

The first of the disciples to encounter this unexpected event is Mary of Magdala. Naturally she assumes Jesus' body has been taken away. Peter and John go back with her, see the wrapping cloths and go into the tomb. Then they understand the teaching that Jesus would rise from death, and they believe.

In what follows in John's gospel, Mary encounters the risen Lord in the garden (at first thinking he is the gardener). It is a pity we do not hear this part of the story.

Still, we have the whole Easter season to uncover the full reality of the risen Lord. The ambiguity of this account of the resurrection actually fits our own experience well, for we encounter the risen Lord in the mystery of word and sacrament.

CONCLUDING PRAYER

Prayer over the People (Easter Sunday)

May almighty God bless us through today's Easter Solemnity
and, in his compassion,
defend us from every assault of sin.
Amen.

And may he, who restores us to eternal life
in the Resurrection of his Only Begotten,
endow us with the prize of immortality.
Amen.

Now that the days of the Lord's Passion have drawn to a close,
may we who celebrate the gladness of the Paschal Feast
come with Christ's help, and exulting in spirit,
to those feasts that are celebrated in eternal joy.
Amen.

And may the blessing of almighty God,
the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
come down on us and remain with us for ever.
Amen.

(Adapted from the Solemn Blessing for the Easter Vigil, Roman Missal p. 422)

An alternative translation of the scripture readings is given here from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV). This may be particularly useful for those in parishes which use the NRSV Lectionary.

EASTER SUNDAY

FIRST READING (NRSV)

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles 10:34, 37-43

Peter began to speak to those assembled in the house of Cornelius.
“You know the message God sent to the people of Israel,
preaching peace by Jesus Christ –
he is Lord of all.

That message 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 oppressed 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”.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM (NRSV)

Psalm 118.1-2, 16-17, 22-23 (R.24)

R. This is the day the Lord has made;
let us rejoice and be glad.

or:

R. Alleluia! (Two or three times)

O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
his steadfast love endures forever.

Let Israel say,

“His steadfast love endures forever.” R.

“The right hand of the Lord is exalted;
the right hand of the Lord does valiantly.”
I shall not die, but I shall live,
and recount the deeds of the Lord. **R.**

The stone that the builders rejected
has become the chief cornerstone.
This is the Lord’s doing;
it is marvellous in our eyes. **R.**

SECOND READING (NRSV)

A reading from the letter of Paul to the Colossians 3:1–4

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.

Alternative Second Reading (NRSV)

A reading from the first letter of Paul to the Corinthians 5:6–8

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.

GOSPEL (NRSV)

A reading from the holy gospel according to John 20:1–9

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.
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.