

First Sunday of Lent (Cycle C)

First Reading: Deuteronomy 26:4-10

The events in this reading take place as the Israelites are camped on the shore of the Jordan River ready to enter the Promised Land. Moses bids them to remember all that God has done for them. When they are settled in this new land, he tells them that every year they should offer the first fruits of their harvest to the Lord.

Second Reading: Romans 10:8-13

Paul was proud of his Jewish heritage and wanted all his people to be saved. The question of what will happen to Jews who do not believe in Jesus caused Paul a great deal of grief and anxiety. In this section of the letter to the Romans, he addresses this issue.

Second Sunday of Lent (Cycle C)

First Reading: Genesis 15:5-12, 17-18

This passage recounts the making of a covenant between God and Abraham. Ancient Near-Eastern people often established a covenant by cutting animals in half and setting the halves opposite each other. The participants then walked in the blood flowing between the halves, thereby establishing a blood relationship. But the covenant we will hear about today involves God, who will participate in a more dramatic way.

Second Reading: Philippians 3:17-4:1

The ancient city of Philippi was located in what is today northeastern Greece. Paul's community of converts at Philippi was especially dear to him. In this section of his letter to them, Paul is upset — but not with them. He has heard that false teachers have come to the community, teaching that Jewish food laws and the rite of circumcision applied even to Christians.

Third Sunday of Lent (Cycle C)

First Reading: Exodus 3:1-8, 13-15

When he was a young man, Moses had slain an Egyptian official, and he had to flee into the desert near Mount Sinai (sometimes called Mount Horeb). In the ensuing years, he settled down, married and worked as a shepherd. Now, probably thinking he had a quiet future, his life takes a different turn.

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 10:1-6, 10-12

Paul did not want his Corinthian converts to be overconfident. They were saved by their faith in Jesus, but they still needed to live a daily life pleasing to God. (In this passage, we will hear Paul refer to an interesting piece of Jewish folklore not found in the Bible. The legend is that the rock from which God gave them water followed them wherever they went in their desert wanderings.)

Fourth Sunday of Lent (Cycle C)

First Reading: Joshua 5:9-12

After Moses died, God selected Joshua to lead the Israelites. In this reading, Joshua and the Israelites have just crossed the Jordan River and now at long last are in the Promised Land.

Second Reading: 2 Corinthians 5:17-21

Some members of the Corinthian community found it hard to accept Paul's teachings. They challenged his credentials and sincerity as an apostle because he was not an eyewitness to the earthly life of Jesus. In this passage, Paul defends his ministry as an apostle.

Fifth Sunday of Lent (Cycle C)

First Reading: Isaiah 43:16-21

This section of the book of Isaiah contains the words of a prophet who addressed God's people exiled in Babylon (located in modern-day Iraq). He encourages them that one day they will be free to return home to Jerusalem. This journey will be through the desert, but God will transform this barren wasteland to ease their passage home.

Second Reading: Philippians 3:8-14

The city of Philippi was located in what is today northeastern Greece, a country where Olympic-type games were popular. Paul draws upon this image to motivate the people to keep pressing forward in their spiritual growth.

Passion Sunday (Palm Sunday)

First Reading: Isaiah 50:4-7

Chapters 40-55 of the book of Isaiah contain the message of a prophet who spoke to God's people during their exile in Babylon. Several times the prophet speaks about a Servant who will one day deliver God's people. Because the Servant is portrayed as suffering, Christians have traditionally identified Jesus with him.

Second Reading: Philippians 2:6-11

In the years following Christ's death and resurrection, Christians began to develop the prayers and hymns that would become part of their rituals. In today's passage from the letter to the Philippians, Paul appears to be quoting an early Christian hymn celebrating the dying and rising of Christ.

Easter Vigil (Cycle C)

First Reading: (*Because of the number of readings for the Easter Vigil, no introduction has been provided.*)

Second Reading: Romans 6:3-11

In a previous section of his letter to the Romans, Paul taught that we sinners are reconciled to God through the death and resurrection of Jesus. Now Paul notes that we experience this dying and rising when, in the immersion form of baptism, we are symbolically “buried” in the water and emerge to new life.

Easter (Cycle C)

First Reading: Acts 10: 34, 37-43

The Apostle Peter was originally skeptical about preaching the Gospel to non-Jews. But one day, the Holy Spirit summoned him to preach to a Gentile — the pagan army officer Cornelius and his household. Today’s passage is a portion of Peter’s sermon, which summarizes the life and ministry of Jesus.

Second Reading: Col. 3:1-4

The letter to the Colossians depicts Christ as the only mediator between God and the world. A previous passage of the letter presented baptism as the way we are united with Christ. The author will today remind us of the heights to which Christ has raised us, and then call upon us to live up to this.

Second Sunday of Easter (Cycle C)

First Reading: Acts 5:12-16

During the seven weeks of the Easter Season, the first reading is always from the Acts of the Apostles. Its author, Luke, saw the history of salvation in three great stages: In the first stage, found in the Old Testament, God’s Spirit raises up *leaders and prophets* to guide the people; in the second stage, found in Luke’s Gospel, the Spirit anoints *Jesus* as God’s holy one; and in the third stage, described in the Acts of the Apostles, the Spirit works in the *Church*, fulfilling Christ’s promise to be with us until the end of time.

Second Reading: Revelation 1:9-13, 17-19

This year during the Easter Season, the second reading each Sunday is from the book of Revelation, written near the end of the first century. Revelation is an Easter book because it focuses on the Risen Jesus and our final victory over sin and death. Today’s passage describes the call that the author received. He was to convey God’s message of hope to Christians who were being persecuted.

Third Sunday of Easter (Cycle C)

First Reading: Acts 5:27-32, 40-41

The Acts of the Apostles tells the story of the early Church during the first 30 years after the resurrection of Jesus. It describes God's Spirit at work, directing, encouraging and supporting the members of the Church.

Second Reading: Revelation 5:11-14

The book of Revelation was written around 95 A.D. for Christians living in what is today Turkey. The Roman emperor ordered his subjects to worship him as a god. When the Christians resisted, they were persecuted. The book of Revelation was written to encourage them. Today's passage describes a vision of God's people enjoying heavenly life and singing God's praises for their victory.

Fourth Sunday of Easter (Cycle C)

First Reading: Acts 13:14, 43-52

None of the readings at liturgy during the seven-week Easter Season are from the Old Testament. In its place, we read from the Acts of the Apostles to show how the Easter message spread far and wide to all parts of the Mediterranean world. Today, Paul and Barnabas are preaching in what is now central Turkey.

Second Reading: Revelation 7:9, 14-17

The book of Revelation was not intended to predict actual people and events in future times. The author was concerned only about people and events in his own time and was given no privileged information about the future. In today's passage, the author encourages people of that time by presenting a vision of God's people enjoying heavenly life.

Fifth Sunday of Easter (Cycle C)

First Reading: Acts 14:21-27

The Acts of the Apostles shows how the Easter message spread to all parts of the Mediterranean world. Today we hear a travelogue of part of one of Paul's missionary journeys that took him to modern-day Turkey. The mountainous terrain there made travel difficult and dangerous. The situation was made even worse because of the constant threat of robbers, flash floods and wild animals.

Second Reading: Revelation 21:1-5

Many people think that the book of Revelation gives secret information about future events, including the end of the world. But it was really intended to be a source of hope for Christians suffering persecution toward the end of the first century. The author vividly describes visions of how God will ultimately overcome all evil and bring all creation to its destiny.

Sixth Sunday of Easter (Cycle C)

First Reading: Acts 15:1-2, 22-29

It is about 20 years after Jesus' death and resurrection. The Church is already experiencing questions about its doctrine and practices. In today's reading, the Church is dealing with the major problem of whether to impose circumcision and observance of the Jewish law on its Gentile converts.

Second Reading: Revelation 21:10-14, 22-23

Revelation is an Easter book because it focuses on the Risen Jesus and our final victory over sin and death. In this passage, the author uses such phrases as "heavenly Jerusalem" or "new Jerusalem" to describe the Church in its glory at the end of time.

Ascension (Cycle C)

First Reading: Acts 1:1-11

Today's passage takes us back to the beginning verses of the Acts of the Apostles and sets forth the themes that Luke is going to develop throughout this, the longest book of the New Testament. His major theme is the role of the Holy Spirit, who enables the apostles to be effective witnesses to Jesus. (The Holy Spirit is mentioned 57 times in the Acts of the Apostles.)

Second Reading: Hebrews 9: 24-28, 10: 19-23

On Yom Kippur, the high priest sacrificed a goat on the altar in the temple. Then he took some of the blood into the holiest place in the temple sanctuary where only he was allowed to go. There, he sprinkled the blood as a renewal of the covenant made at Mount Sinai, and prayed that God would forgive all their sins committed during the previous year. This ritual is the backdrop for today's reading from the letter to the Hebrews.

Pentecost (Cycle C)

First Reading: Acts 2:1-11

Pentecost was a Jewish feast that celebrated the beginning of the harvest. It took place 50 days after the feast of Passover. Jewish pilgrims came to Jerusalem from all over the ancient world for the celebration of the feast. Today we hear how Pentecost became a Christian feast.

Second Reading: Romans 8:8-17

Today's passage comes from chapter eight of Paul's letter to the Romans, which stresses the importance of the Holy Spirit in the lives of Christians. Paul wants us to remember that the Spirit who will raise our bodies on the last day is the same Spirit who inspires us to holiness every day. Today Paul offers a sharp contrast between life in the flesh (meaning, *life prone to sin*) and life in the Spirit.

Trinity Sunday (Cycle C)

First Reading: Proverbs 8:22-31

The book of Proverbs is mostly a collection of wise sayings to help people live a good life. Today's passage from Proverbs, however, is a hymn to Wisdom which in the Old Testament is sometimes symbolically described as a person coming from God.

Second Reading: Romans 5:1-5

Paul's letter to the Romans is his most detailed and important theological work. The Church chose this brief passage to be read on Trinity Sunday because, in these five verses, all three persons of the Trinity are mentioned.

Body and Blood of Christ (Cycle C)

First Reading: Genesis 14:18-20

Today's reading from the book of Genesis tells us all we know about an obscure king named Melchizedek. Abraham had just won a military victory, and Melchizedek honors him with a meal of bread and wine. Over the course of time, this meal was seen as a distant foreshadowing of the Eucharist, which is why this passage was chosen for today's feast.

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

The first letter to the Corinthians was written about 25 years after Christ's death and resurrection. Today's passage contains our earliest written account of what Jesus did at the Last Supper. It predates even the Gospels.