

# LITURGY NOTES

Easter Season 2022

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## In This Issue

In this issue of *Liturgy Notes* we cover the readings and music suggestions for the Easter season, from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Easter through Pentecost. There are notes on the celebration of the fifty days as one season, and on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Easter as “Divine Mercy Sunday.”

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## The Fifty-Day “Great Sunday”

The Paschal Triduum, culminating in Easter Sunday, begins the fifty days of Easter, a “week of weeks” sometimes referred to as the “Great Sunday.” It is as though the entire season is celebrated as one feast day. The joy of Easter is maintained in whatever ways possible; in the early Church, it was common for both fasting and kneeling to be banned during the entire season.

How do we maintain that sense of joy the whole time? As the weeks pass by, the exuberant joy of Easter Sunday can settle into a kind of quiet, even a sense of “winding down” if we’re not careful. The flowers we put out in mid-April may not make it until June; the music may not be as big and boisterous after a few weeks. The Paschal candle will be visible and lit, of course, but if it’s all by itself in reminding us that Easter is still with us, it may appear merely a formality.

Creativity and care need to be given to maintaining the sense of joyful solemnity all the way through. No, the later Sundays might not feel exactly the same as Easter Sunday itself, but everything that can be done should be done. It’s good to have a plan in place to replace the flowers; they needn’t look the same all the way along, but they should still look much fuller and more festive than in Ordinary Time. Don’t just involve the “extra” musicians on Easter Sunday morning; bring them back every now and then. And of course, “Alleluia” should be on our lips very, very frequently.

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## The Octave of Easter and “Divine Mercy Sunday”

For years now, on the initiative of St. John Paul II, the second Sunday of Easter has been designated as “Divine Mercy Sunday,” giving attention to a devotion that has become increasingly popular. This devotional practice can include the display of the “Divine Mercy” image and the celebration of a novena. While the liturgical books acknowledge the title for the day, it is worth noting that in its official implementation, Divine Mercy Sunday had no effect upon the liturgy itself.

The Octave of Easter is one of the highest, most solemn times of the liturgical year, and is celebrated as such. This is a good example of the distinction between devotional and liturgical prayer: both

contribute to the spiritual life of the faithful, in their own distinct ways. In the liturgy, homilies may draw the connection between the continuing celebration of the resurrection and the mercy of God. But “Divine Mercy” elements needn’t be introduced into the liturgy in any way that draws attention away from the liturgical focus of the day. To meet people’s spiritual needs, this may require making sure that this devotional commemoration is celebrated richly in devotional prayer: the novena can be celebrated, and the chaplet encouraged in private prayer or in parish groups, for example.

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**April 24, 2022**

**2nd Sunday of Easter, C**

**Breaking Open the Word**

**First Reading: Acts 5:12–16**

Following Jesus’ resurrection and the descent of the Holy Spirit (which we will celebrate at Pentecost, Acts 2:2–4), the Apostles continue Jesus’ healing ministry to the wonderment of the people. We are told that they are gathered in Solomon’s Portico, which was a covered portion of the Temple precinct on the eastern side of the Temple. Luke’s depiction of the Apostles as gathered in the Temple area coheres with the overall centrality of the Temple in Luke’s gospel. The Temple was associated with holiness, the forgiveness of sins, and God’s presence, and its setting for the Apostles’ healing ministry is a way for the evangelist to convey that their actions are truly of God.

**Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 118**

We sing verses from the same psalm as on Easter Sunday. Note that in Hebrew the phrase, “save us, we beseech you” is “*hoshia-nah*,” that is “*hosanna*,” which formed the acclamation for Palm Sunday. The psalmist rejoices in God’s steadfast love and mercy.

**Second Reading: Revelation 1:9a–11, 12–13, 17–19**

The Book of Revelation is an eschatological vision experienced by John of Patmos. As a whole, the book is cinematic and full of extravagant imagery as John strives to put his experience into words. In these verses, John sees “one like a Son of Man” who is Christ.

Christ identifies himself as the totality of the cosmos (“the first and the last, and the living one”). It is interesting to pair this very visual reading with the gospel passage for today, which seems to emphasize *not* seeing. Together the two readings suggest that faith is not simply an intellectual enterprise, but requires the whole spirit and imagination of a person.

**Gospel: John 20:19–31**

Although we read this reading on the second Sunday of Easter, it begins on the “evening of the same day that Jesus rose from the dead”—that is, after Mary Magdalene has returned to the disciples and shared her news. Jesus then appears among the disciples, greets them with peace, and declares that he is now sending them, just as he had been sent from the Father. Breathing on them, Jesus imparts the Holy Spirit. Thomas, however, is not present for this formative moment.

Imagine what would have been like to have been Thomas during that first Easter week. While all of his companions had experienced a transformative encounter with the risen Christ and were living in Easter joy, Thomas spends an additional week in a period of mourning and incredulity. Like Mary Magdalene earlier in the chapter, Thomas seems to expect a body—and a wounded body at that. His astounded declaration, “My Lord and my God!,” indicates his total shift in perspective, as he experiences Jesus in a new way.

**Reflection**

Today is known as “Divine Mercy Sunday,” referring to Jesus’ mercy for Thomas. We might also consider how Thomas’ companions likewise showed him mercy. Rather than insisting they were correct him, or, worse, excluding Thomas for not believing, the

disciples continue to form a community around Thomas until he, too, has his moment. How can we, in our interactions with friends and family who may be at different stages of faith, support and nourish people through mercy?

## Reflecting the Word in Song

Alleluia! Love is Alive (S. Angrisano, J. Manibusan, S. Hart)	SS 177
Alleluia, Alleluia, Give Thanks (D. Fishel)	CBW 383 / G 317
Be Not Afraid (B. Dufford)	CBW 481 / G 430 / GP 24 / SS 271
If You Believe and I Believe (Zimbabwean traditional)	G 520
In the Breaking of the Bread (T. Smith)	SS 251
Join in the Dance (D. Schutte)	CIS 6.21
A Living Hope (M. Guimont)	CBW 613
O Sons and Daughters (O FILII ET FILIAE)	CBW 404 / SS 185
Sing a New Song (D. Schutte)	CBW 563 / G 384 / GP 193
That Easter Day With Joy Was Bright (LASST UNS ERFREUEN)	CBW 392
We Remember (M. Haugen)	G 417
We Walk By Faith (M. Haugen)	CBW 495 / G 414

May 1, 2022

3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Easter, C

## Breaking Open the Word

### First Reading: Acts 5:28–32, 40b–41

The Acts of the Apostles, as a whole, describes the early activities of the followers of Jesus after his resurrection and ascension into heaven. Luke, the author of both the gospel according to his name and the Acts of the Apostles, chooses to highlight the unity of the early Christians, and their commitment and conviction to spreading the news of Jesus' death and resurrection.

The passage we read today requires a bit of context. Earlier in the chapter, “many signs and wonders were done among the people through the apostles” (5:12), and Peter in particular is so infused God’s grace that people gathered in the hope that his shadow “might fall on some of them as he came by” (5:15). While this was all quite exciting, it attracted the attention of the religious authorities, and Peter and the apostles were imprisoned (5:17–18). While in prison, an angel of the Lord released them, commanding them to go to the Temple to continue their message of the gospel (5:19–21). Today’s reading takes place when they next encounter the high priest, who, by this point, is exasperated. Peter explains that they are simply responding to God’s summons, and must prioritize God’s call over any human authority.

### Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 30

Psalm 30 is a joyful psalm of praise and confidence in God. The psalmist declares that he had once been in Sheol (the realm of the dead), but God has restored his soul to the living. He urges all the faithful to express their thanks and joy to God.

### Second Reading: Revelation 5:11–14

John of Patmos receives a heavenly vision of the divine throne room. The imagery is fantastical and cinematic, and it strives to

express the fullness of God’s grandeur, the vulnerable divinity of Christ, and the depth of Israel’s traditions. Jesus, figured by the Lamb, is both the victim and the victor, and is the only one worthy to break open the seals of the scroll. The scroll likely signifies knowledge of all that was, and is, and is to come—that is, knowledge of judgment and of good and evil. This is knowledge that only God can hold responsibly, and as the manifestation of God’s fullness (see Col 1:19), so too can Christ. In response to this wondrous moment, all the creatures in heaven, earth, under the earth, and in the sea, sing praises and worship. Their worship acknowledges that the rift between humanity and God (Genesis 3) has now been healed by Jesus Christ.

### Gospel: John 21:1–19

This passage takes place in the final chapter of John’s gospel. Jesus appears to the disciples for a third time and shares a meal with them. Jesus addresses them as “Children” (21:5), referencing the theme throughout the gospel that those who believe will become “children of God” (John 1:12). In contrast to the first reading, wherein Peter is depicted as quite authoritative and confident after Jesus’ ascension, the gospel reading recounts an earlier moment, when Peter still must repair his relationship with Jesus. On the night of Jesus’ arrest, Peter stood near a charcoal fire and denied Jesus three times (18:17–27). Now he again finds himself at a charcoal fire (21:9), but this time it is daylight, and Jesus is with him.

Jesus’ questions and Peter’s responses are a bit “lost in translation” as they are rendered into English. The first two times Jesus asks Peter, “Do you love me?”, Jesus uses the Greek verb *agapáō* from the term *agape*, which indicates a self-giving love. *Agapao* means to love with the type of love that only seeks the good of the other person, and nothing personal in return. When Peter responds, saying “Yes, Lord, you know I love you,” he uses a different word for love: *philéo*. *Philéo* refers to a sort of brotherly love, or friendship type of love. In other words,

Peter is devoted to Christ, but still has room to grow in his understanding and commitment.

When Jesus asks Peter the third time, we see how merciful and compassionate Jesus is, for he “meets Peter where he is.” Jesus says, “Peter, do you love (*phileis*) me?”, and Peter affirms that yes, he loves (*philo*) him. Jesus commissions Peter to tend and feed his flock.

### Reflection

Today’s readings explore the implications of living as a follower of Jesus, offering reflections on missionary conviction, glorious worship, and also of spiritual growth. The gospel reading is particularly moving: Jesus invites Peter to express complete selflessness, and when Peter is not quite ready to do so, Jesus receives what Peter is able to give. This is a very reassuring message for all Christians, but especially those who are contemplating a vocation to the priesthood or religious life. Perhaps one does not feel fully ready; however, just as with Peter, Jesus offers the invitation to serve.

### Reflecting the Word in Song

Alleluia! Alleluia! Let the Holy Anthem Rise (T. Smith)	SS 178
Alleluia, Alleluia, Give Thanks (D. Fishel)	CBW 383 / G 317
Be Not Afraid (B. Dufford)	CBW 481 / G 430 / GP 24 / SS 271
Christ is Alive (TRURO)	CBW 384
Fish With Me (K. Canedo)	SS 211
For You Are My God (J. Foley)	CBW 483 / G 436 / GP 72
Go Make of All Disciples (ELLACOMBE)	CIS 6.28
God is Love! The Heavens are Telling (ABBOT’S LEIGH)	CBW 560
I Am the Bread of Life (S. Toolan)	G 597

A Living Hope (M. Guimont)	CBW 613
New Creation (J. Francois)	SS 125
Now the Green Blade Rises (NOEL NOUVELET)	CBW 403 / G 318
Sing of One Who Walks Beside Us (HOLY MANNA)	CBW 405
The Summons (J. Bell)	CIS 6.39 / SS 230

**May 8, 2022**

**4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter, C**

### Breaking Open the Word

#### **First Reading: Acts 13:14, 43–52**

In Acts 13, Paul of Tarsus begins his ministry following his conversion (Acts 9). The passage we read this morning is from Paul’s first missionary journey, and we can see that Paul concentrates his preaching in urban centres outside of Jerusalem. Antioch of Psidia was one of several cities named Antioch in the Hellenistic world, named after one of the Greek Antiochene rulers who followed Alexander the Great. We can also discern Paul’s *modus operandi*: as a Jew, his first and most natural stop in any city would be the local synagogue. Synagogues were places of prayer and study, and they also functioned as community centres and places of welcome for Jewish travellers. Paul first tries to spread the message of Jesus’ death and resurrection within the synagogue congregation, and while he has some success with the congregants, he faces opposition from the leaders. Similarly, even with the Gentile sympathizers he gains, there is opposition from the “officials” in the city.

As we read Acts, it is important to remember the diversity of expectations in Jewish circles regarding the coming of a Messiah, as well as the brutal regime of the Romans. Paul’s message, while thrilling, would have seemed to some as dangerously volatile for the tenuous peace that held in the absence of insurrections.

Let us be generous of heart towards the earliest hearers of Paul’s preaching, who may have struggled to accept his message out of fear for violent reprisals.

#### **Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 100**

Psalm 100 is a psalm of thanksgiving, exhorting all listeners to give praise to God. The psalmist celebrates God’s steadfast love and “faithfulness to all generations” (100:5).

#### **Second Reading: Revelation 7:9, 14b–17**

Last week we read John’s vision of the Lamb in the heavenly throne room. In today’s passage from Revelation, John sees a “great multitude” robed in white and carrying palm branches (a sign of praise). One of the elders asks John “Who are these, robed in white, and where have they come from” (7:13). When John defers to him, the elder explains that these are ones who have gone through the “great ordeal,” and whose robes have been washed and made white in the “blood of the Lamb.” In the ancient world, “fulling” (or bleaching), was the technique used to make woolen garments as white as possible. It was an expensive method, and the resulting cloth was normally worn only by the elite. John’s image of the blood of the Lamb as making the robes white is both paradoxical and theologically replete. Those who are robed in white are those who have died for the sake of their belief and trust in Christ—they are martyrs. Their white robes “in the blood of the Lamb” evokes their baptismal garments, and also their glory in sharing in the resurrection.

#### **Gospel: John 10:27–30**

John 10 is well-known as Jesus’ “Good Shepherd” discourse (see John 10:11). Using the metaphor of sheep with their shepherd, Jesus notes, “The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep” (10:11). In the few verses we read this morning, Jesus reflects on the profundity of his relationship with his flock: they know his voice, they follow him, and they are totally safe in Jesus’ care. Earlier in the passage, Jesus asserts that he “calls his own sheep by name” (10:3), and so believers are assured that they are deeply loved and known by Jesus. Jesus’

oneness with the Father incorporates believers into eternal life.

### Reflection

Today is Good Shepherd Sunday and it is a moment to reflect on the immensity and beauty of being known and called by God in Jesus Christ. It is a special day to encourage young people to open their hearts to how Jesus is calling them—and to reassure them that Jesus most certainly is calling them in some way. Maybe it is to priesthood or religious life. Maybe to (eventual) married life, or maybe to a devoted life as a single person. Each calling is a gift; let us encourage all youth to listen for how Jesus calls them “by name.”

### Reflecting the Word in Song

Alleluia! Alleluia! Let the Holy Anthem Rise (T. Smith)	SS 178
Alleluia! Love is Alive (S. Angrisano, J. Manibusan, S. Hart)	SS 177
Eat This Bread (J. Berthier/Taizé)	CBW 602
God is Love! The Heavens are Telling (ABBOT’S LEIGH)	CBW 560
I Am the Bread of Life (S. Toolan)	G 597
Like a Shepherd (B. Dufford)	CBW 490 / G 251 / GP 125
The Lord, My Shepherd, Rules My Life (CRIMOND)	CBW 489
No Greater Love (M. Joncas)	CBW 599 / G 444
Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven (LAUDA ANIMA)	CBW 565
Shepherd Me, O God (M. Haugen)	G 29 / SS 128

Sing to the Mountains (B. Dufford)  
G 313 / GP 196

Take and Eat (M. Joncas)  
CBW 611 / CIS 6.8 / G 614

May 15, 2022

5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter, C

### Breaking Open the Word

#### First Reading: Acts 14:21b–27

The first reading continues Paul’s first missionary journey and his successes among the Gentiles. Acts describes how Paul appoints “elders” (*presbyteros*) to lead the communities in his wake. When Paul returns to Antioch, he shares news of the other groups with the community there, and in this way Acts depicts the early Christian communities as small, but united.

#### Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 145

Psalm 145 is a lively psalm of praise of God as king over all creation. The psalmist extolls God’s mercy and steadfast love, exhorting all of creation to join in praise.

#### Second Reading: Revelation 21:1–5a

This passage comes from the final, culminating chapter of the Book of Revelation. John has a cinematic vision of a new heaven and a new earth that replaces the former creation. In this vision “the sea was no more,” which is a way of expressing the absence of chaos or turbulent evil. In other scriptural passages, the sea represents danger and darkness (e.g. Genesis 1:2). In addition to a new creation, the personified, heavenly Jerusalem descends from heaven. In the ancient world, cities were often personified as women, and here Jerusalem is “adorned as a bride for her husband.” The holy city, symbolizing the Church, is a place of new life and safety.

#### Gospel: John 13:1, 31–33a, 34–35

Keen readers will notice that this gospel passage is from the same chapter as we read on Holy Thursday, wherein Jesus washes the

disciples' feet. Today we hear the part when Jesus commands them to love one another has he has loved them. In the few verses we read today, Jesus prepares his disciples for living together as a community when he is no longer physically with them.

### Reflection

As we get closer to Pentecost, the readings focus on how our Christian forefathers and foremothers learned to live with each other in Christ in the Spirit. That is, a key moment of growth among the early followers of Jesus was to continue to hold fast to their faith in his resurrection and to hand on their faith to new believers. Jesus' presence came to be with believers in a new way, through the Spirit.

### Reflecting the Word in Song

Anthem (T. Conry)	G 494 / GP 13
Christians, Let Us Love One Another (PICARDY)	CBW 595
God Our Author and Creator (BEACH SPRING)	CIS 6.32
Love Divine, All Loves Excelling (HYFRYDOL)	CBW 625
Love Never Fails (K. Canedo & J. Manibusan)	SS 132
No Greater Love (J.M. Joncas)	CBW 599 / G 444
Open My Eyes (J. Manibusan)	SS 337
The Servant Song (R. Gillard)	G 476
Ubi Caritas (J. Berthier)	CBW 67 / G 301
Ubi Caritas (B. Hurd)	S 259
Vine and Branches (T. Thomson)	SS 261
What Wondrous Love is This (WONDROUS LOVE)	G 295 / SS 364
With One Voice (R. Manalo)	SS 232

May 22, 2022

6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter, C

### Breaking Open the Word

#### First Reading: Acts 15:1–2, 22–29

This passage is known as the “Jerusalem Council.” It is not a conciliar event in the same way that later dogmatic councils were, but it is an important moment in the history of the Church, when the apostles recognize Paul’s ministry to the Gentiles. In this passage Luke recounts a meeting between Paul and the Apostles in which it is determined that Gentile believers do not need to be circumcised (as they would if they were entering into Judaism), but should simply avoid meat that had been sacrificed to idols and to avoid fornication. Since Jesus himself, as a Jew, would have been circumcised, it was not unreasonable that some early believers considered it a necessity for following him. It is of great relief to Paul (himself a Jew)—and to the communities he founded—that this measure was deemed unnecessary for new followers of Christ. In later letters, Paul will develop the theology of Baptism as the only ritual required for new Christians.

#### Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 67

Psalm 67 is an invocation and petition for God’s continued blessing. The psalm uses an idiomatic phrase “make his face shine upon us,” which is an expression in Hebrew that connotes God’s regard and presence.

#### Second Reading: Revelation 21:10–14, 22–23

This week’s second reading continues with the same passage as last Sunday. John describes his vision of the heavenly city as resplendent in jewels and perfectly symmetrical. Through this vision John is assured of the intentionality of God’s plan for salvation.

#### Gospel: John 14:23–29

These verses come from Jesus’ “Farewell Discourse” in the Gospel of John. This takes

place before Jesus' death and resurrection, and it is a moment of teaching in which he equips his disciples with the insights and resilience they will need to continue to be community in his name when he is no longer with them in the same way. Jesus emphasizes his oneness with the Father, and uses several important concepts: love, home, and peace. Together in his name, the disciples will have comfort and security. Jesus also promises to send them the "Advocate" (*Paraclete*)—the Holy Spirit, who will vivify the community and help them maintain their life in Christ.

### Reflection

Love. Home. Peace. These are powerful and compelling assurances from Jesus. This week, let us reflect on where in our own lives we feel love, home, and peace, and consider how Jesus meets us there. How can we, through the Spirit, bring love, home, and peace to others?

### Reflecting the Word in Song

Anthem (T. Conry)	G 494 / GP 13
Bread for the World (B. Farrell)	CIS 6.1 / G 596
Come, Holy Spirit (LAMBILLOTTE)	CBW 416 / SS 193
Go Make of All Disciples (ELLACOMBE)	CIS 6.28
God Our Author and Creator (BEACH SPRING)	CIS 6.32
Lord, Send Out Your Spirit (K. Canedo)	SS 88
Love Divine, All Loves Excelling (HYFRYDOL)	CBW 625
Love Never Fails (K. Canedo & J. Manibusan)	SS 132
No Greater Love (J.M. Joncas)	CBW 599 / G 444
The Servant Song (R. Gillard)	G 476
The Summons (J. Bell)	CIS 6.39 / SS 230

Table of the World (NETTLETON)	CIS 6.30
Ubi Caritas (J. Berthier)	CBW 67 / G 301
Ubi Caritas (B. Hurd)	SS 259

**May 29, 2022**

## Ascension

### Breaking Open the Word

#### First Reading: Acts 1:1–11

Today's first reading takes us to the beginning of the Acts of the Apostles. After a period of forty days following his resurrection, Jesus prepares to ascend to heaven, and, gathered with his Apostles, mandates them to witness to him in Jerusalem, all Judea and Samaria, and the ends of the earth. In this way, Jesus describes the gospel message radiating outward from the holy city of Jerusalem. Importantly, Jesus redirects some of the Apostles' immediate concerns. Someone asks him if this is when "you will restore the kingdom to Israel?" indicating that some of his followers still expected a battle or a forceful takeover. Jesus indicates they will be equipped with a different kind of power—the power of the Holy Spirit, who will bolster them until Jesus returns again.

#### Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 47

Psalm 47 is an exuberant enthronement psalm, celebrating God as king.

#### Second Reading: Ephesians 1:17–23

Ephesus was a large city and an important trading centre in the Roman empire. The city was known for its devotion to the Greek goddess Artemis (Lat. Diana), to whom the citizens had erected an enormous temple in her honour. The Ephesians were a very cultured and community, with influential systems of honour and shame that structured society. Accordingly, Paul's letter to the Ephesians is very sophisticated and rich in Christological

insights, as a way of addressing the community in an erudite manner.

In this passage, Paul describes Jesus as seated at God's right hand in power, almost the way a trusted prince would sit next to the Emperor. It is an image that would resonate with the Ephesians. Paul helps the Ephesians to understand that they are not subjugated under this new rule, but, as part of the Church which is Christ's body, they are part of God's new dominion.

## Second Reading (Alternate): Hebrews

**9:24–28; 10:19–23**

The author of Hebrews was gifted with the inspired insight that Jesus was both the priest and victim of his own self-sacrifice. Hebrews contrasts Jesus' self-gift with the animal sacrifices at the Temple, which must be performed regularly. In contrast, Jesus' death is the sacrifice that renders all others unnecessary—one merely has to believe in its efficacy. Living in the twenty-first century, we might struggle to appreciate how challenging this was for early believers who were accustomed to petitioning the divine realm with sacrificial offerings of animals, grain, or liquids. There is no doubt that early Christians would have felt uneasy about ceasing their habits of sacrificial rituals—those practices were how they knew how to communicate with the divine! Thus, it is quite remarkable for the author of Hebrews to write as compellingly as he does, urging his hearers to “approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith.” This requires a huge amount of trust and belief!

## Gospel: Luke 24:44–53

The gospel reading, in fact, takes place just before Acts 1:1–11 (heard in the first reading). Jesus offers his disciples some final words of reassurance before he is taken up to heaven. Notably, Jesus tells them that “everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled” (Luke 24:44), which gives us a glimpse into how the earliest followers of Jesus began to make sense of what had happened among them. They turned to scripture, which here

refers to the Old Testament. In this way, Jesus' followers were able to see the astounding events that had taken place against the backdrop of tradition, and thereby understand these happenings as part of God's plan of salvation. When Jesus ascends to heaven, his disciples “worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; and they were continually in the temple blessing God” (Luke 24:52). This is a beautiful “recipe” for all Christians: worship in great joy and blessing.

## Reflection

Since April 17, the readings have taken us on a journey through various early moments in the Easter church. We have seen how the church grew from a small community of disciples outward into pockets of communities spread around the eastern Mediterranean. When we think of our forebears in faith, are there particular moments that stand out, or certain people we are inspired by? Let us carry these people and moments in prayer as we prepare for Pentecost next weekend.

## Reflecting the Word in Song

Alleluia! Sing to Jesus (HYFRYDOL)	CBW 426
Crown Him With Many Crowns (DIADEMATA)	CBW 437
Go Make of All Disciples (ELLACOMBE)	CIS 6.28
Go to the World (ENGELBERG)	CBW 508
Hail the Day That Sees Him Rise (LLANFAIR)	CBW 599 / SS 188
Hail Thee, Festival Day! (SALVE FESTA DIES)	CBW 388
I Send You Out (J. Angotti)	SS 214
I Will Be With You (J. Moore)	G 322
Lord Jesus, We Must Know You (ST. THEODULPH)	CBW 517

Lord, You Give the Great Commission  
(ABBOT'S LEIGH) CBW 691

One Sacrifice of Christ (R. Modlin, R. Feduccia)  
SS 189

The Summons (J. Bell)  
CIS 6.39 / SS 230

Table of the World (NETTLETON)  
CIS 6.30

**June 5, 2022**

**Pentecost**

### Breaking Open the Word

#### **First Reading: Acts 2:1–11**

There are two accounts of how the Holy Spirit came to be among the Apostles. The first takes place in the Gospel of John (our gospel reading for today), when Jesus appears among the disciples and breathes on them, saying, “Receive the Holy Spirit” (John 20:22). This is a very private and intimate bestowal of the Spirit. In contrast, in the first reading today, we hear how the Holy Spirit comes upon the Apostles in a very public and dramatic fashion. The rushing wind and tongues of fire evoke the theophanic experiences of the prophets in the Old Testament (see 1 Kings 18 for a good example). The disciples’ ability to speak and be understood in other languages recalls the Tower of Babel (Gen 11:1–9), but here in Acts, God, through the Holy Spirit, uses the diversity of language to reach every person and unify humanity, rather than as a deterrent. The locations named essentially serve as a map, outlining the idealized reaches of the Roman Empire, encompassing the regions adjoining the Mediterranean Sea, the Persian Gulf, and the Sinai Peninsula. This is a way of expressing the notion that God reaches out to the whole world through the Holy Spirit.

#### **Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 104**

Psalm 104 reflects on the creative power of God’s Spirit, which infuses and sustains all of creation.

#### **Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:3b–7, 12–13**

Paul’s beautiful insights in this passage stem from a very concrete situation in the Corinthian community. In Paul’s absence, some members of the Corinthian church were claiming they were superior to the others in the community, due to their assigned roles, their independent wealth, or even because of who had baptized them (1 Cor 1:10–17)! Paul does some impressive theological thinking in response to this crisis of solidarity in the Corinthian community. In today’s passage, Paul teaches that one gift is not superior to another—whether it is preaching, teaching, prophesying, or interpreting (1 Cor 12:8–10). Paul says that all of these gifts are “activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses” (1 Cor 12:11). That is, in the Spirit, each person is gifted in their own way; one gift is not superior to the other, and all are necessary for the flourishing of the Church.

#### **Second Reading (Alt.): Romans 8:8–17**

This passage comes at the end of the first half of Romans in which Paul addresses both Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians, urging them to overcome any differences or friction between them. In the early decades of Christianity, ecclesial communities had to discern how to accommodate the variety of different backgrounds people had come from. Unlike today, when many Christians are born into a Christian family, the early Church communities were comprised of people from all walks of life and traditions. Accordingly, Paul speaks of their faith in Christ as coming into a new life, infused by the Spirit. This new life in the Spirit is vivified by the “Spirit of God who raised Jesus from the dead” (Rom 8:11). Since they all share in this same Spirit, they all share in “a spirit of adoption”—that is, they are all children of God, unified by their faith, who, like Jesus, can call “Abba! Father!” (8:15).

### **Gospel: John 20:19–23**

As mentioned above, this account of the gift of the Holy Spirit takes place very privately and quietly on the evening of Easter Sunday. The disciples have enclosed themselves in a house out of fear—a quite reasonable response in the wake of Jesus’ horrific death—and we might imagine that they are still in shock, grieving the loss of their friend. To compound their bewilderment, three of them (Mary Magdalene, Peter, and the Beloved Disciple), have had some reported that the tomb is empty, and Mary Magdalene has gone even further and said “I have seen the Lord!” (John 20:18). How can this be?

When Jesus appears among the disciples, notice the first thing he says, “Peace be with you” (John 20:19). “Peace” (Gk. Eiréne; Heb. Shalom), is the standard Jewish greeting, and it conveys a hope for total wellness and wholeness. In the Greco-Roman empire, “peace” was the promise of the Emperor for the conquered territories—the so-called “pax Romana” (Roman peace)—but this was enforced with threats and brute strength. Indeed, Jesus’ crucifixion can be understood as part of enforcing the pax Romana, since he was put to death to avoid insurrection and rioting. This hardly signifies true peace or wellness. When Jesus greets his disciples with “Peace be with you,” he bears on his resurrected body the marks of his crucifixion and suffering. It is a powerful way to indicate that the brutality of the empire did not win.

Jesus repeats his greeting of Peace, and then breathes the Holy Spirit upon them. Just as in Genesis, when the first human is animated by God’s breath (Gen 2:7), so too Jesus inaugurates his disciples’ new life in the resurrection through breathing the Spirit among them. Interestingly, it coincides with the ability to discern and forgive the sins of others. Why would this be part of the gift of the Holy Spirit?

If we recall Genesis 2–3, the one prohibition for the man and the woman was that they could not eat from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. According to the creation account in

Genesis, the ability to discern between good and evil was a privilege enjoyed only by God (see Gen 3:22). The gift of the Holy Spirit that Jesus bestows on his disciples is a huge gift of trust and spiritual oneness. With this gift Jesus essentially says, “together in faith, you are children of God and share in my life with the Father. This gift comes with the ability to discern good and evil. This gift requires your wisdom and love.”

### **Reflection**

Candidates preparing for Confirmation are accustomed to hearing about the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit: Wisdom, Knowledge, Counsel, Fortitude, Understanding, Piety, and Fear of the Lord. Today’s readings invite everyone to consider the movement of the Holy Spirit in our lives. How are we animated by the Spirit? Do we listen to the Spirit’s promptings? Do we find peace in the Spirit’s counsel?

### **Reflecting the Word in Song**

- Come, Holy Spirit (LAMBILLOTTE) CBW 416 / SS 193
- Come, Holy Spirit (T. Booth) SS 191
- Come to Us, Creative Spirit (CASTLEWOOD) CBW 408
- Everyone Moved By the Spirit (C. Landry) GP 68
- God Our Author and Creator (BEACH SPRING) CIS 6.32
- God the Spirit, Guide and Guardian (HYMN TO JOY) CBW 510
- Lord, Send Out Your Spirit (K. Canedo) SS 88
- O Holy Spirit, by Whose Breath (EISENACH) CBW 412
- Send Out Your Spirit (J. Manibusan) SS 349
- Sequence for Pentecost CBW 418 / CBW 419 / CBW 692 / SS 192

Spirit Blowing Through Creation (M. Haugen)  
CBW 415 / G 325

Veni Sancte Spiritus (J. Berthier) G 326

Spirit of the Lord (L. Deiss)  
GP 208

You Have Anointed Me (M. Balhoff et al)  
G 483 / GP 81

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### Credits:

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