

Gratitude Foundation



***“Were not ten cleansed? Where are the other nine?
Has only this foreigner returned to give thanks to God?”***

(Lk. 17:15-17)

Third Sunday of Easter—Year B

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“In all things give thanks, it is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus”

(1 Thess; 5:18)

Third Sunday of Easter

Reading 1

Acts 3:13-15, 17-19

Peter said to the people:
"The God of Abraham,
the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob,
the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus,
whom you handed over and denied in Pilate's presence
when he had decided to release him.
You denied the Holy and Righteous One
and asked that a murderer be released to you.
The author of life you put to death,
but God raised him from the dead; of this we are witnesses.
Now I know, brothers,
that you acted out of ignorance, just as your leaders did;
but God has thus brought to fulfillment
what he had announced beforehand
through the mouth of all the prophets,
that his Christ would suffer.
Repent, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be wiped away."

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 4:2, 4, 7-8, 9

R. (7a) Lord, let your face shine on us.

When I call, answer me, O my just God,
you who relieve me when I am in distress;
have pity on me, and hear my prayer!

R. Lord, let your face shine on us.

Know that the LORD does wonders for his faithful one;
the LORD will hear me when I call upon him.

R. Lord, let your face shine on us.

Psalm (Continued)

O LORD, let the light of your countenance shine upon us!

You put gladness into my heart.

R. Lord, let your face shine on us.

As soon as I lie down, I fall peacefully asleep,

for you alone, O LORD,

bring security to my dwelling.

R. Lord, let your face shine on us.

Reading 2

1 John 2:1-5a

My children, I am writing this to you

so that you may not commit sin.

But if anyone does sin, we have an Advocate with the Father,

Jesus Christ the righteous one.

He is expiation for our sins,

and not for our sins only but for those of the whole world.

The way we may be sure that we know him is to keep

his commandments.

Those who say, "I know him," but do not keep his commandments
are liars, and the truth is not in them.

But whoever keeps his word,

the love of God is truly perfected in him.

Alleluia

Luke 24:32

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Lord Jesus, open the Scriptures to us;

make our hearts burn while you speak to us.

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

Luke 24:35-48

The two disciples recounted what had taken place on the way,
and how Jesus was made known to them
in the breaking of bread.

While they were still speaking about this,
he stood in their midst and said to them,
"Peace be with you."
But they were startled and terrified
and thought that they were seeing a ghost.
Then he said to them, "Why are you troubled?
And why do questions arise in your hearts?
Look at my hands and my feet, that it is I myself.
Touch me and see, because a ghost does not have flesh and bones
as you can see I have."
And as he said this,
he showed them his hands and his feet.
While they were still incredulous for joy and were amazed,
he asked them, "Have you anything here to eat?"
They gave him a piece of baked fish;
he took it and ate it in front of them.

He said to them,
"These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you,
that everything written about me in the law of Moses
and in the prophets and psalms must be fulfilled."
Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.
And he said to them,
"Thus it is written that the Christ would suffer
and rise from the dead on the third day
and that repentance, for the forgiveness of sins,
would be preached in his name
to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.
You are witnesses of these things."

Reflection

We don't often think of the Easter Season as a time of penance or a time of repentance. This weekend's readings suggest otherwise. The Word of God is calling us to repentance and conversion. In his famous and powerful Pentecost speech St. Peter is calling all of us to repentant. In our second reading St. John reminds us that Jesus is the expiation for our sins. The setting of the Gospel is the appearance of the risen Lord in the Upper Room on that first Easter Sunday evening. Jesus is commissioning the apostles and us to preach a message of repentance for the forgiveness of sins in His name to all the nations.

Repentance or conversion is a very personal act of the heart and the mind to reconnect with the source of love and life, with the source of mercy and forgiveness. The gift of Easter must be received by each one of us in a very personal way. God's love, God's very life is given to us in a very personal way through the Sacred Heart of His only Son pierced on the cross for our offenses. It is a love that comes from the heart and so must be received by the heart of each one of us. St. John talks about God's love perfected in us. God's love is only fulfilled in His beloved, in our reception of His love.

The power of Easter is the power of love. The temple veil was torn from top to bottom, earth shook, graves were torn open, and the stone was rolled away. God's love is more powerful than death. It is a love that is eternal and therefore the source of everlasting life. The real power comes precisely in its freedom. It is a love that is freely given and a love that must be freely received. Repentance, conversion, and faith are about the free reception of this love and remaining in or abiding in God's love.

Love seeks union with the beloved. We are called to become one with God as Jesus prayed, "Father, may they be one, as You Father, are in Me and I in You, that they may also be in us..." (Jn 17:21) Jesus prayed for this union at the Last Supper as he gave up His body and poured out His blood. We are invited to enter a common union with Him at the altar. We are called to become what we receive, the Body of Christ. It is a free gift of God's life to us. In this gift the love of God's love is perfected in us, but only if we freely enter union with Him. In this union of love we realize our purpose, the purpose for which we were born into this world. This requires the gift of our lives to God, in other words repentance, conversion, and faith.

By becoming the Body of Christ, we then become the font of God's love for the world. In this very personal union with Jesus, we become His hands and feet, His voice and His abiding presence in our world. Only by becoming the Body of Christ can we call ourselves Christians. Easter means nothing for us unless we allow ourselves to enter into this personal union with the Risen Lord. Each one of us must truly become what we were first called, the Easter People. That is precisely what Jesus is calling us to be. It is only through this union with the Risen Lord that eternal life is possible. So, come Holy Spirit fill the hearts of us Your faithful and enkindle within us the fire of Your love.

Yours in the Risen Lord,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Fr. Glenn". The script is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "F" and a long, sweeping underline.

Personal Witness

Filled with the Holy Spirit Peter stood up and boldly proclaimed, “The author of life you put to death.” That statement by St. Peter always cuts me to the heart. St. John the beloved disciple gives us the beautiful words of creation in the prologue to his Gospel, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God, and all things came into being through Him. What came into being through Him was life.”

In the Greek language of the New Testament there are two distinct words that we translate as life. One is *bios* which describes biological or physical life as we know it. The other word is *zoe* which speaks of a spiritual being that comes from the life breath of God. In the creation story of Genesis, God takes the clay of the earth and breathes His life breath into it and man becomes a living being. That first Easter Sunday the Risen Lord breathes His life breath again on the apostles and they become a new creation. This is the source of the word *zoe*, which is sometimes translated as the fullness of life or life eternal, because God is the author of and the source of this life.

One day in systematic theology class in the seminary we were having a heated discussion. The professor did not like the direction that our conversation had taken and said, “Time out gentlemen,” as he made the “T” sign with his hands. Then he said, Jesus Christ is not a divine contingency plan.” What he meant by that is that God did not get it wrong he first time and then send His Son into the world to fix things. God knew from the moment of creation that He would become flesh and enter into our world to deliver His love to us in a personal way, to die on the cross to take away our sins. In that light we can say the God was the author of His own death!

One day at a school Mass the Gospel was the beautiful parable of the *Prodigal Son*. I asked the children a question, “Why did the son leave his father’s love, he had everything?” Then I went on to ask, “Why did Adam and Eve turn away from God in the Garden of Eden, like the prodigal son, they had everything?” Then a little girl who had a habit of answering without being called on, looking at me as if I had asked another stupid question, blurted out, “Because they could!” It was a better answer than I was looking for. God is love and the author of love, and love by its very nature must be free or it would not be love. Like a loving parent who knows that their children will naturally make mistakes as a part of life, God knew that we would fail from time to time. God is the author of freewill.

My experience of this life that we call the Spiritual life, is a journey of ups and downs, of successes and failures. St. Bonaventure called this the *Souls Road to God*. He likened it to climbing a ladder to God in which we sometimes take one step forward and then two steps backward. I have discovered that repentance is an everyday thing and even an every moment experience. I as draw closer to the Light of Christ I see more things in my life that need purging. I see areas of sin and indifference that I could not see before, and that leads me to constantly turn back to Him, to call on His grace. I must stand before the Cross and let the flood of His grace envelop me. And so, my weakness and my failures become my strength because they turn me back to Him, the author of life, real life, life eternal. And for that I am eternally grateful.

