

# SUNDAY READINGS

## READ AT HOME

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

Year B

5 May 2024



### Collect

Grant, almighty God,  
that we may celebrate with heartfelt devotion these days of joy,  
which we keep in honour of the risen Lord,  
and that what we relive in remembrance  
we may always hold to in what we do.  
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 Commentaries

The Preface for the feast of Saints Peter and Paul calls Peter the one “who established the early Church from the remnant of Israel,” and Paul the “master and teacher of the Gentiles that you call.” Peter might well complain about this characterisation. Luke makes it clear (three times!) that Peter is the one whose eyes are opened to the Gentile mission. His vision of the sheet let down from heaven with every imaginable creature in it taught him that nothing was unclean (Acts 10:9-16). This led him to the encounter with Cornelius, then the insight that “anybody of any nationality who fears God ... is acceptable to him” (10:35). Neither Missal nor Lectionary do him justice, but Luke makes it perfectly clear that Peter is the true pioneer of the mission to the Gentiles.

**A reading from the Acts of the Apostles**  
**10:25–26, 34–35, 44–48**

As Peter reached the house Cornelius went out to meet him, knelt at his feet and prostrated himself. But Peter helped him up. 'Stand up', he said 'I am only a man after all!'

Then Peter addressed them: 'The truth I have now come to realise' he said 'is that God does not have favourites, but that anybody of any nationality who fears God and does what is right is acceptable to him.'

While Peter was still speaking the Holy Spirit came down on all the listeners. Jewish believers who had accompanied Peter were all astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit should be poured out on the pagans too, since they could hear them speaking strange languages and proclaiming the greatness of God. Peter himself then said, 'Could anyone refuse the water of baptism to these people, now they have received the Holy Spirit just as much as we have?' He then gave orders for them to be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ. Afterwards they begged him to stay on for some days.

**First Reading**

There are two events in Acts, the importance of which Luke highlights by recounting them at length three times. One is Paul's transforming experience of Jesus on the road to Damascus, the other is a double conversion – the conversion of the Roman centurion Cornelius to Christ and that of Peter to the Gentiles (see 10:1-49; 11:1-18; 15:7-11). It's this two-fold conversion that we hear about today, though readers would do well to peruse the whole of chapter 10 for its account of Peter's vision. In spite of its importance, the Sunday lectionary contains no account of this event that prompts Peter's enlightenment.

The text for today homes in on the mini-Pentecost event in which the Holy Spirit is poured out on Peter's non-Jewish audience, triggering tongues and praise. By refusing to let Cornelius reverence him when he arrived Peter had made it clear that this was going to be all God's work. The order in which faith, baptism and Spirit are given varies greatly in the episodes Luke records. On this occasion baptism "in the name of Jesus Christ" follows the gift of the Spirit. After the drama, Peter stays on, demonstrating plainly that in this new era social and religious barriers had been overcome and table fellowship was possible. The mission to the Gentiles had begun.

This is a dynamic reading filled with both human and divine action. It deserves to be proclaimed with energy, joy and spirit.

**Responsorial Psalm**

**Ps 97:1–4**

**R.** The Lord has revealed to the nations his saving power.

or

**R.** Alleluia.

Sing a new song to the Lord  
for he has worked wonders.  
His right hand and his holy arm  
have brought salvation. **R.**

The Lord has made known his salvation;  
has shown his justice to the nations.  
He has remembered his truth and love  
for the house of Israel. **R.**

All the ends of the earth have seen  
the salvation of our God.  
Shout to the Lord all the earth,  
ring out your joy. **R.**

**Responsorial Psalm**

The response to the psalm immediately restates the theme of the first reading: "The Lord has revealed to the nations his saving power." The psalm verses go on to acclaim the saving power of the one who is God both of Israel and the nations. They are drawn from Psalm 97/98, a hymn that sings the praises of the Lord of all peoples and of creation itself.

Cornelius and his household are, as it were, a sample of those who will bless the God of salvation. All the nations and indeed "all the earth" will do so. The psalmist highlights God's supremacy over all that might have threatened Israel: "his right hand and holy arm have brought salvation." But the revelation of God's saving power, far from being confined to Israel, has encompassed the whole world and set in motion a global tide of joy.

The response, while in statement form, is essentially an acclamation and should be announced with strength and conviction. The verses sustain the spirit of praise from start to finish. Readers who proclaim them affirmatively will inspire the assembly to make the response a confession of praise.

**A reading from the first letter of St John 4:7–10**

My dear people,  
let us love one another  
since love comes from God  
and everyone who loves is begotten by God and  
knows God.  
Anyone who fails to love can never have known God,  
because God is love.  
God's love for us was revealed  
when God sent into the world his only Son  
so that we could have life through him;  
this is the love I mean:  
not our love for God,  
but God's love for us when he sent his Son  
to be the sacrifice that takes our sins away.

**A reading from the holy Gospel  
according to John**

**15:9–17**

Jesus said to his disciples:  
'As the Father has loved me,  
so I have loved you.  
Remain in my love.  
If you keep my commandments  
you will remain in my love,  
just as I have kept my Father's commandments  
and remain in his love.  
I have told you this  
so that my own joy may be in you  
and your joy be complete.  
This is my commandment:  
love one another,  
as I have loved you.  
A man can have no greater love  
than to lay down his life for his friends.  
You are my friends,  
if you do what I command you.  
I shall not call you servants any more,  
because a servant does not know  
his master's business;  
I call you friends,  
because I have made known to you  
everything I have learnt from my Father.  
You did not choose me,  
no, I chose you;  
and I commissioned you  
to go out and to bear fruit,  
fruit that will last;  
and then the Father will give you  
anything you ask in my name.  
What I command you  
is to love one another.'

**Second Reading**

In last Sunday's reading, John told his community there were two commandments, to believe in Jesus Christ and to love one another (3:23). He went on to explain what that first commandment entailed (4:1-6); now he unpacks the second. At the very heart of today's text, John condenses the whole of the biblical saga in three short words, "God is love."

The essence of his teaching is clear. God is love and loved us first. That love has been revealed to the world in God's Son. The Son's saving death has freed us from sin. In consequence, we must love one another. Unlike the apostle Paul, who may well have been tempted to offer a theological explanation of how the Son's sacrifice "takes our sins away," John is content to simply state the case.

Apart from the fleeting shadow of those who fail to love, and who therefore have never known God, the entire reading is full of light. It is suffused with the love that gives life – God's love, the Son's love, our love. Its tender tone will be evident to ministers of the word. They will convey this spirit to the assembly when they proclaim John's reflection with warm affection.

**Gospel**

If we needed reminding that we are privileged bystanders at Jesus' farewell meal with his disciples, today's gospel certainly does that for us. Jesus speaks with great intimacy and affection, inviting the disciples into the ceaseless flow of love that he and the Father exchange. To dwell in this love is to be richly blessed with joy, friendship and fruitfulness.

Two Sundays ago, we heard Jesus, the good shepherd, speak repeatedly of laying down his life for his sheep. Here once is enough. It prompts him to insist that the disciples are his friends, not servants, because he has opened his heart to them. Jesus had called himself their master a little earlier when he washed their feet, but in the process turned the relationship upside down. Now he fulfils what John declared so beautifully in the prologue: "No one has ever seen God; it is the only Son, who is nearest the Father's heart, who has made him known" (1:18).

Of its nature this gospel text is one to be proclaimed with great warmth, thoughtfulness and sincerity. There are many phrases that the assembly deserves time to absorb and delight in. The minister of the word has the privilege of speaking them in Jesus' name.

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.

## SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

### FIRST READING (NRSV)

**A reading from the Acts of the Apostles**

**10:25–26, 34–35, 44–48**

On Peter's arrival at Caesarea,  
Cornelius, a centurion of the Roman cohort, met him,  
and falling at his feet, worshipped him.  
But Peter made him get up, saying,  
"Stand up; I am only a mortal."  
Then Peter began to speak to those assembled  
in the house of Cornelius,  
'I truly understand that God shows no partiality,  
but in every nation anyone who fears him  
and does what is right is acceptable to him.  
While Peter was still speaking,  
the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the word.  
The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astounded  
that the gift of the Holy Spirit  
had been poured out even on the Gentiles,  
for they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God.  
Then Peter said,  
"Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people  
who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?"  
So he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.  
Then they invited him to stay for several days.

### SECOND READING (NRSV)

**A reading from the first letter of John**

**4:7–10**

Beloved, let us love one another,  
because love is from God;  
everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.  
Whoever does not love does not know God,  
for God is love.  
God's love was revealed among us in this way:  
God sent his only Son into the world  
so that we might live through him.  
In this is love,  
not that we loved God but that he loved us  
and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins.

### GOSPEL (NRSV)

**A reading from the holy gospel according to John**

**15:9–17**

Jesus said to his disciples:  
"As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you;  
abide in my love.  
if you keep my commandments,  
you will abide in my love,  
just as I have kept my Father's commandments  
and abide in his love.

"I have said these things to you  
so that my joy may be in you,  
and that your joy may be complete.  
This is my commandment,  
that you love one another as I have loved you.  
No one has greater love than this,  
to lay down one's life for one's friends.  
"You are my friends if you do what I command you.  
I do not call you servants any longer,  
because the servant does not know what the master is doing;  
but I have called you friends,  
because I have made known to you everything  
that I have heard from my Father.  
"You did not choose me but I chose you.  
And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last,  
so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name.  
I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another."

## Blessing for Easter

May God, who by the Resurrection of his Only Begotten Son  
was pleased to confer on us  
the gift of redemption and of adoption,  
give us gladness by his blessing.

**Amen.**

May he, by whose redeeming work  
we have received the gift of everlasting freedom,  
make us heirs to an eternal inheritance.

**Amen.**

And may we, who have already risen with Christ  
in Baptism through faith,  
by living in a right manner on this earth,  
be united with him in the homeland of heaven.

**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 Easter Time, Roman Missal p 712.)