

# THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER— 4 MAY 2025



## COLLECT

May your people exult for ever, O God,  
in renewed youthfulness of spirit,  
so that, rejoicing now in the restored glory of our adoption,  
we may look forward in confident hope  
to the rejoicing of the day of resurrection.  
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

There is no question, the gospels can be confusing. John 21 seems to be an appendix (the previous chapter had a concluding paragraph). In this chapter, the risen Lord feeds his disciples with bread and fish by the Sea of Tiberias – on the only other occasion when this place was mentioned, Jesus feeds the crowd with bread and fish (John 6). Luke 24 has a short version of last week's gospel (John 20) but then adds that Jesus eats a piece of grilled fish. John 21 incorporates the story of a great haul of fish; there are many similarities with the story of the miraculous haul of fish found in Luke 5, but this one happens at the beginning of Jesus' ministry when he first calls Peter, James and John to follow him. The same figures are present in John 21 which ends with the injunction: 'follow me.' The commissioning of Peter here reminds us of the commissioning given in Matthew 16. How are all these elements related? There is plenty of work for biblical scholars to make the connections and to enlighten us!

Peter is a key figure in today's readings. The first half of the Acts of the Apostles focusses on Peter (before the spotlight is turned on Paul). In the first reading, we hear his fearless witness. In the gospel, he is the one who gets the fishing trip going and he is at the centre of the encounter with the risen Lord. Then he is commissioned by the Lord to care for the flock of Christ. With Peter and the other disciples, we are drawn to understand the reality of the resurrection and to encounter the risen Christ.

**A reading from the Acts of the Apostles**  
**5:27–32, 40–41**

The high priest demanded an explanation of the apostles. ‘We gave you a formal warning,’ he said ‘not to preach in this name, and what have you done? You have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and seem determined to fix the guilt of this man’s death on us.’ In reply Peter and the apostles said, ‘Obedience to God comes before obedience to men; it was the God of our ancestors who raised up Jesus, but it was you who had him executed by hanging on a tree. By his own right hand God has now raised him up to be leader and saviour, to give repentance and forgiveness of sins through him to Israel. We are witnesses to all this, we and the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him.’ They warned the apostles not to speak in the name of Jesus and released them. And so they left the presence of the Sanhedrin glad to have had the honour of suffering humiliation for the sake of the name.

**First Reading**

The jealousy of the Jewish authorities led to the apostles being arrested, jailed, miraculously freed, re-arrested and brought for trial. In response to a formal warning not to preach about Christ, what does Peter do? He witnesses fearlessly to the resurrection! All the apostles and the Holy Spirit testify to the saving work of Christ.

The apostles get another warning and are released. The key to this surprising outcome is found in the verses that have been omitted from the reading. The Pharisee Gamaliel argued that if the Christian movement was merely human, it would fail; if it was of God, they could not prevail against it. So the apostles are flogged and set free.

A key message of the Acts of the Apostles is thus made clear: the invincible power of the Holy Spirit is driving the growth and spread of the Christian way.

The reader should present this courtroom drama with all the vigour of Peter’s response in the Spirit. “Men” should be read as “human beings”.

**Responsorial Psalm      Ps 29:2, 4–6, 11–13**

**R.** I will praise you, Lord,  
for you have rescued me.  
or

**R.** Alleluia.

I will praise you, Lord, you have rescued me  
and have not let my enemies rejoice over me.  
O Lord, you have raised my soul from the dead,  
restored me to life from those who sink into the grave. **R.**  
Sing psalms to the Lord, you who love him,  
give thanks to his holy name.  
His anger lasts but a moment; his favour through life.  
At night there are tears, but joy comes with dawn. **R.**  
The Lord listened and had pity.  
The Lord came to my help.  
For me you have changed my mourning into dancing;  
O Lord my God, I will thank you for ever. **R.**

**Responsorial Psalm**

In Psalm 29/30, someone finds themselves in mortal peril. They pray, crying out for help and deliverance. God hears their prayer and lifts up the afflicted person. This is a psalm of thanksgiving.

It is used today as a response to Peter’s proclamation of Jesus’ death and resurrection. Many of the phrases evoke for Christians the Easter mystery: vindicated enemies, soul raised from the dead, restored to life. Remembering the discovery of the empty tomb early on the first day of the week, we hear: *At night there are tears, but joy comes with the dawn.* It was one of the psalms we may have heard at the Easter Vigil after the fourth reading from Isaiah.

It is a beautiful psalm to pray whenever we seek God’s help in time of tribulation.

## A reading from the book of the Apocalypse 5:11–14

In my vision, I, John, heard the sound of an immense number of angels gathered round the throne and the animals and the elders; there were ten thousand times ten thousand of them and thousands upon thousands, shouting, 'The Lamb that was sacrificed is worthy to be given power, riches, wisdom, strength, honour, glory and blessing.'

Then I heard all the living things in creation – everything that lives in the air, and on the ground, and under the ground, and in the sea, crying, 'To the One who is sitting on the throne and to the Lamb, be all praise, honour, glory and power, for ever and ever.' And the four animals said, 'Amen'; and the elders prostrated themselves to worship.

## A reading from the holy Gospel according to John

21:1–19

Jesus showed himself again to his disciples. It was by the Sea of Tiberias, and it happened like this: Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee and two more of his disciples were together. Simon Peter said, 'I'm going fishing.' They replied, 'We'll come with you.' They went out and got into the boat but caught nothing that night.

It was light by now and there stood Jesus on the shore, though the disciples did not realise that it was Jesus. Jesus called out, 'Have you caught anything, friends?' And when they answered, 'No,' he said, 'Throw the net out to starboard and you'll find something.' So they dropped the net, and there were so many fish that they could not haul it in. The disciple Jesus loved said to Peter, 'It is the Lord.' At these words 'It is the Lord,' Simon Peter, who had practically nothing on, wrapped his cloak round him and jumped into the water. The other disciples came on in the boat, towing the net and the fish; they were only about a hundred yards from land.

As soon as they came ashore they saw that there was some bread there, and a charcoal fire with fish cooking on it. Jesus said, 'Bring some of the fish you have just caught.' Simon Peter went aboard and dragged the net to the shore, full of big fish, one hundred and fifty-three of them; and in spite of there being so many the net was not broken. Jesus said to them, 'Come and have breakfast.' None of the disciples was bold enough to ask, 'who are you?'; they knew quite well it was the Lord. Jesus then stepped forward, took the bread and gave it to them, and the same with the fish. This was the third time that Jesus showed himself to the disciples after rising from the dead.

[After the meal Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon son of John, do you love me more than these others do?' He answered, 'Yes Lord, you know I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed my lambs.' A second time he said to him, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?'

## Second Reading

The Lamb of God is Christ, crucified and risen. In this majestic vision, all of creation – not just human beings but every creature – offers praise at the throne of Christ. As Eucharistic Prayer IV says, our proclamation is *giving voice to every creature under heaven*. The reader has a big responsibility to capture this sense of grandeur and wonder.

There are two long lists in this reading. They should not be spoken in a staccato manner, but slowly with a gradually falling pitch so that the assembly is caught up in the splendour of the heavenly worship.

## Gospel

This extraordinary story of the disciples' encounter with the risen Christ emphasises that Jesus is real and yet... somehow different. They knew him well but still did not recognise him when he stood on the shore. (In the garden by the tomb, Mary mistakes him for the gardener!) The big haul of fish causes John to exclaim, *It is the Lord!* Perhaps he was remembering the haul of fish when he and the others were first called to follow Christ (Lk 5). Even later during the breakfast, the gospel remarks, *none of them was bold enough to ask, 'who are you?' They knew...* Recognising the risen Lord is a wondrous experience of faith.

Yet the gospel is also at pains to emphasise the physical reality of the risen Lord. He's built a fire and is cooking fish. He adds some of the disciples' fish to the breakfast meal which he shares with them. Perhaps by now they were remembering the earlier feeding of the crowd with bread and fish at the waterside at Tiberias (Jn 6). For us, the story evokes the eucharistic meal which we too are about to share with the risen Christ.

After breakfast, Jesus gives Peter special attention, calling forth from him a threefold profession of love (perhaps to echo Peter's threefold denial?) which is accompanied by a threefold commissioning to care for the flock of God's people. Discipleship and mission go together.

Appendix this chapter may be, but the narrative is filled with energy and drama and is a powerful opportunity for the assembly to encounter the risen Lord and to profess their love with Peter.

He replied 'Yes, Lord, you know I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Look after my sheep.' Then he said to him a third time, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' Peter was upset that he asked him the third time, 'Do you love me?' and said, 'Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed my sheep.

'I tell you most solemnly, when you were young you put on your own belt and walked where you liked; but when you grow old you will stretch out your hands, and somebody else will put a belt around you and take you where you would rather not go.'

In these words he indicated the kind of death by which Peter would give glory to God. After this he said, 'Follow me.']

[Short Form: omit text in brackets.]

## 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)

*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.*

## THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER

### FIRST READING ( NRSV)

#### **A reading from the Acts of the Apostles 5:27–32, 40–41**

The captain went with the temple police  
and brought the apostles, who were teaching in the temple,  
and had them stand before the council.

The high priest questioned the apostles, saying,  
"We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name,  
yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching  
and you are determined to bring this man's blood on us."

But Peter and the apostles answered,  
"We must obey God rather than any human authority.  
The God of our ancestors raised up Jesus,  
whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree.  
God exalted him at his right hand  
as Leader and Saviour  
that he might give repentance to Israel  
and forgiveness of sins.  
And we are witnesses to these things,  
and so is the Holy Spirit  
whom God has given to those who obey him."

Then the council ordered the apostles not to speak in the name of Jesus,  
and let them go.

As they left the council,  
they rejoiced that they were considered worthy  
to suffer dishonour for the sake of the name.

### RESPONSORIAL PSALM ( NRSV)

**Psalm 30.1+3, 4-5, 10+11a+12b (R.1a)**

**R.** I will praise you, Lord,  
for you have rescued me.

or:

**R.** Alleluia! (*Two or three times*)

I will extol you, O Lord, for you have drawn me up,  
and did not let my foes rejoice over me.  
O Lord, you brought up my soul from Sheol,  
restored me to life from among those gone down to the Pit. **R.**

Sing praises to the Lord, O you his faithful ones,  
and give thanks to his holy name.

For his anger is but for a moment;  
his favour is for a lifetime.

Weeping may linger for the night,  
but joy comes with the morning. **R.**

Hear, O Lord, and be gracious to me!  
O Lord, be my helper!  
You have turned my mourning into dancing.  
O Lord my God, I will give thanks to you forever. **R.**

## SECOND READING ( NRSV)

### A reading from the book of Revelation 5:11–14

I, John, looked,  
and I heard the voice of many angels surrounding the throne  
and the living creatures and the elders;  
they numbered myriads of myriads  
and thousands of thousands,  
singing with full voice,  
"Worthy is the Lamb that was slaughtered  
to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might  
and honour and glory and blessing!"

Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth  
and under the earth and in the sea,  
and all that is in them, singing,

"To the one seated on the throne and to the Lamb  
be blessing and honour and glory and might  
forever and ever!"  
And the four living creatures said, "Amen!"  
And the elders fell down and worshipped.

## GOSPEL ( NRSV)

### A reading from the holy gospel according to John 21:1–19

Jesus showed himself again to the disciples  
by the Sea of Tiberias;  
and he showed himself in this way.  
Gathered there together were Simon Peter;  
Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee,  
the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples.  
Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing."  
They said to him, "We will go with you."  
They went out and got into the boat,  
but that night they caught nothing.

Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach;  
but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus.  
Jesus said to them,  
"Children, you have no fish, have you?"  
They answered him, "No."  
He said to them,  
"Cast the net to the right side of the boat,  
and you will find some."  
So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in  
because there were so many fish.

That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter;  
"It is the Lord!"

When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord,  
he put on some clothes, for he was naked,  
and jumped into the sea.  
But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish,  
For they were not far from the land,  
Only about ninety meters off.

When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there,  
with fish on it, and bread.

Jesus said to them,  
"Bring some of the fish that you have just caught."  
So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore,  
full of large fish, a hundred fifty-three of them;  
and though there were so many, the net was not torn.  
Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast."  
Now none of the disciples dared to ask him,  
"Who are you?"  
because they knew it was the Lord.  
Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them,  
and did the same with the fish.  
This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples  
after he was raised from the dead.

[When they had finished breakfast,  
Jesus said to Simon Peter,  
"Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?"  
He said to him,  
"Yes, Lord; you know that I love you."  
Jesus said to him,  
"Feed my lambs."

A second time he said to him,  
"Simon son of John, do you love me?"  
He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you."  
Jesus said to him, "Tend my sheep."

He said to him the third time,  
"Simon son of John, do you love me?"  
Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time,  
"Do you love me?"  
And he said to him,  
"Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you."  
Jesus said to him,  
"Feed my sheep."

"Very truly, I tell you,  
when you were younger,  
you used to fasten your own belt  
and go wherever you wished.  
But when you grow old,  
you will stretch out your hands,  
and someone else will fasten a belt around you  
and take you where you do not wish to go."  
He said this to indicate the kind of death  
by which he would glorify God.  
After this he said to him,  
"Follow me."]

[Short Form: omit text in brackets.]