

THE WORD IS ACTIVE AND ALIVE



2022 Easter Reflections - Year C



JESUS 4 EVERYONE

*The slogan of the New Evangelisation in the
Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Singapore*



1 Jesus is depicted by the figure "J"

2 In Jesus we say "Yes"

3 It is "us" who encounter Jesus

4 The colour tone in the word "Jesus" shows a movement from lukewarm (yellow/orange) depicted by "us" to passionate (red) depicted by "Yes"

5 The yellow tone on the 3 strips moving into the red tone shows another movement from lukewarmness to passion after encountering Jesus

6 The 3 strips signify that by our baptism, we are called to be priest, prophet, and king. We share in the 3-fold mission of Jesus Christ.

7 "4" represents the four Tenets of the New Evangelisation: Word, Worship, Communion and Witness.

YOUR OPINION IS VALUABLE

Thanks for picking up a copy of this booklet! As you dive into the pages of this booklet, we would like to know what worked and what could be better improved. Let us know what you think by giving us your valuable feedback.



[ONE.ORG.SG/FEEDBACK](https://one.org.sg/feedback)

CONTENTS

Easter Message 2022	6
The Purpose of this booklet	7
How to use this booklet	7
Facilitating Group Reflection	9
Catholic.sg Radio Broadcasting Time	10
Sundays of Easter (Year C)	11
Easter Sunday	12
Second Sunday of Easter	18
Third Sunday of Easter	24
Fourth Sunday of Easter	31
Fifth Sunday of Easter	37
Sixth Sunday of Easter	43
Seventh Sunday of Easter	49
Pentecost Sunday	55
Appendix - Activities	62
Acknowledgements	66



EASTER MESSAGE 2022

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Easter joy to you.

Alleluia, the Lord has truly risen, Alleluia.

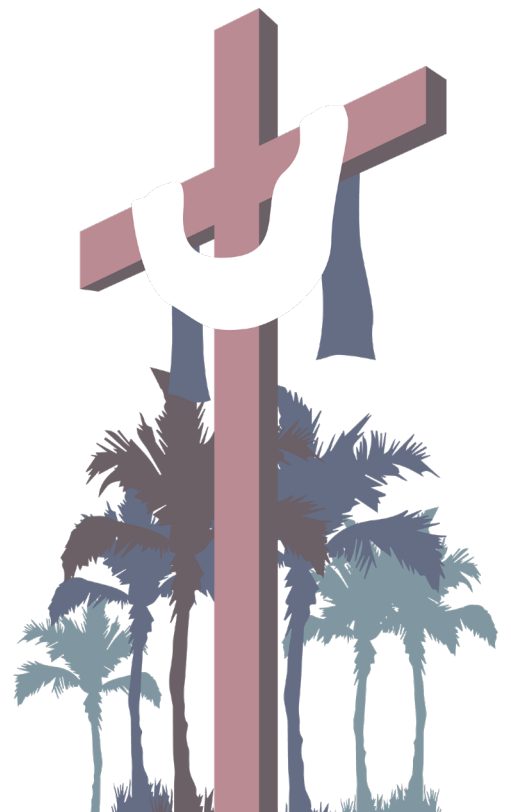
There is a song by Bee Gees which is titled: 'Words'. In the chorus they sing: 'It's only words and words are all that I have to take your heart away'.

Words enable us to communicate what is in our minds and in our hearts. The Lord has spoken many words of love to us. Will we allow the words of the Lord to take our hearts away? Where the Lord is concerned, it was not only words that He spoke, His words were accompanied with actions. Our Lord acted on His Word to us and it is a history that we can read about. Do those words still carry the power it has within our hearts? As we ponder on Easter joy, we are invited to ponder on Our Lord Jesus' words so that in those words we find the depth of His love for us and His desire once again to come to us as closely as He did when He walked upon the earth.

The joy of Easter grows in you when you share it with others.

May the Lord bless you with Easter peace, joy and love.

Rev. Fr. Terence Pereira
Episcopal Vicar
for the New Evangelisation



THE PURPOSE OF THIS BOOKLET

This resource is intended for families, RCIA groups, parish organisations, ministries, small Christian communities and neighbourhood Christian communities. It may also be used for individual reflection.

- To promote the Christian community in the neighbourhood as a place where we can hear the word of God and put it into practice.
- To give participants an experience of community and a sense of their

mission by reaching out to neighbours and those in need.

- To gather parish organisations / ministries to pray together as one and put Christ back in the center.
- To increase communication between family members. Love should be the main message in all communications, so that the sessions are aimed at families sharing stories, doing meaningful activities together, sharing faith and being reconciled with one another.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOKLET

These reflections may be used either (1) before participating in Sunday's liturgy, as a way of preparation to receive God's Word at Mass, or (2) after participating in the liturgy as a continuation of 'breaking open the Word of God' in our lives.

In the spirit of generosity, group members volunteer beforehand to read Scriptures and other parts of the text.

A different group facilitator can take the responsibility in each session to foster good interaction and to keep time.

Someone should record the discussion in general terms and then email it to the members who are absent.

The duration of each session is about two hours.

The time and place for the next meeting should be announced at the end of each session.

SESSION FORMAT

OPENING PRAYER

Everyone will pray the opening prayer and sing an opening hymn to foster a spirit of reflection and openness to God's Word and one another.

READINGS

The three scripture texts should be read at least twice, allowing some time for a silent listening to the Word.

The passages are then explained by the leader or group facilitator using the given write up. Preparation is recommended for the leader or group facilitator to read and understand prior the meeting.

THOUGHTS

Someone reads this section, which is meant to deepen our reflection(s) on the readings of the week. Allow adequate time for reflection(s).

REFLECTIONS

This section is designed for personal reflection and sharing if you are in a group. Then, select the "Supplementary Questions" relevant to your group. Allow time to reflect on these questions and also time for everyone to respond.

TAKE HOME

Discern how the Word of God is inviting us collectively or individually to respond through concrete action(s).

DOING YOUR BIT

Your action to reach out or evangelise to another person to share the Good News of Jesus.

CLOSING PRAYER

The session ends with a prayer being prayed by everyone in the group. Everyone will pray for each participant and then for the community.

APPENDIX: ACTIVITIES

The appendix section contains activities that further enrich our spiritual journey with our fellow sisters and brothers in Christ.

FACILITATING GROUP REFLECTIONS

For where two or three meet in my name, I am there with them - Matthew 18:20

Be mindful of Christ's presence. Adopt a humble and reverent manner when speaking or acting within the group. Read the text meditatively and give your best attention to the words of the Scripture readings.

May they all be one, just as, Father, you are in me and I am in you - John 17:21

Help everyone to feel at home and take special care to welcome newcomers. Treat each person as a beloved member of the community and invite one another to participate in the session by taking turns to read the text. Use a language that everyone can understand so that no one feels left out.

...and their great men make their authority felt. Among you this is not to happen - Mark 10:42-43

Avoid being authoritative or domineering by acting aggressively, flaunting knowledge or telling others what to do. If there is advice to be given, do so after the reflection is done. Choose words that are easily understood by all when speaking. Avoid giving a lengthy and verbose sharing that consumes other people's opportunities to offer their sharing.

If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross every day and follow me - Luke 9:23

At the core of these reflections is the Word of God, the teachings of the Church and the invitation for our conversion towards Christ. If the group wanders away from this during the session, gently invite one another to re-focus.

Because when the time comes, the Holy Spirit will teach you what you should say - Luke 12:12

There is no need to prepare sharing in advance or to appoint people to share. Wait patiently for God's Spirit to inspire generosity and remember to give thanks after someone volunteers to contribute their own faith experience.

...your light must shine in people's sight, so that, on seeing your good works, they may give praise to your Father in heaven - Matthew 5:16

These reflections challenge us to do the will of God - to reflect the love of Christ to others we meet. Spend some time at the start of the next group session sharing with one another how each one has tried to do this over the past week.



CATHOLICSG RADIO

brings you the audio version of 2022 Easter Reflection Booklet.

Join our presenters as they take you through the reflection via the CatholicSG Radio app.

**Broadcast times will be on every Wednesday
at 7:45am starting from 13 April 2022.**

Besides listening via a web browser: <https://radio.catholic.sg/>, the CatholicSG Radio app is available for downloading via the following app stores:



Apple App Store



Google Play Store



Huawei App Gallery

Podcast Versions

The same reflections will be available as podcasts on the app itself

SUNDAYS OF EASTER (YEAR C)

The Word is Active and Alive

WEEK	READINGS	THEME
Easter Sunday	Acts of the Apostles 10:34, 37-43; Colossians 3:1-4; John 20:1-9	Witness to the Word
2 nd Sunday of Easter	Acts of the Apostles 5:12-16; Revelations 1:9-13, 17-19; John 20:19-31	The Word Gives Peace
3 rd Sunday of Easter	Acts of the Apostles 5:27-32, 40-41; Revelations 5:11-14; John 21:1-19	Recognising the Word
4 th Sunday of Easter	Acts of the Apostles 13:14, 43-52; Revelations 7:9, 14-17; John 10:27-30	The Word for All
5 th Sunday of Easter	Acts of the Apostles 14:21-27; Revelations 21:1-5; John 13:31-35	The Word Ever New
6 th Sunday of Easter	Acts of the Apostles 15:1-2, 22-29; Revelations 21:10-14, 22-23; John 14:23-29	Remembering the Word
7 th Sunday of Easter	Acts of the Apostles 7:55-60; Revelations 22:12-14, 16-17, 20; John 17:20-26	Being One with the Word
Pentecost Sunday	Acts of the Apostles 2:1-11 Romans 8:8-17 John 14:15-16, 23-26	The Word Gives Life

EASTER SUNDAY

Witness to the Word

OPENING PRAYER

Father, God of all life, who on this day, through Your Only Begotten Son, conquered death and unlocked for us the path to eternity. Grant, we pray, that we who keep the solemnity of the Lord's resurrection be brought to the light of life. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

READINGS

1ST READING:

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES 10:34, 37-43

"All who believe in Jesus will have their sins forgiven through his name." (v. 43)

That's the power of the name of Jesus, a name which means 'God saves'. Peter experienced this power first-hand. In his proclamation of the kerygma (literally, 'preaching'), Peter tells his hearer that he is a witness to the miraculous works and powerful words of Jesus; a witness to His death by crucifixion; and a witness to Jesus' resurrection from the dead as they shared a meal together.

This powerful personal experience of Peter about the risen Christ needs to be told and retold, which is fortunately recorded in the Bible. Even for us who are not eye-witnesses, we can still receive the grace and power of the risen Christ as long as we believe that Jesus died so as to take away what separates us from God our Father, and that He rose again so that all life is made new.

2ND READING: COLOSSIANS 3:1-4

"You have been brought back to true life with Christ." (v. 1)

Being brought back to true life means that we have died, not physically, but spiritually when we were baptised. Our baptism in Christ was a dying to our old life and being brought back to true life with Christ. Easter is the acknowledgement, the remembrance, and the celebration of this true life, and that is why we

renew our baptismal promises with the intentionality of claiming this new life as ours, even if we may not feel this way.

This new "life you have is hidden with Christ in God". Only with the heart of faith and hope, and with eyes of the mind dwelling on heavenly things, can our souls be open to the reality of what this "hidden" life is about. Question is, are we ready for its power then?

GOSPEL: JOHN 20:1-9

"He saw and he believed." (v. 8)

Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early in the morning and after reporting to Peter and the beloved disciple about the empty tomb, these two raced to the tomb. It was such anxious love for our Lord that spurred them to act thus. It was this love for our Lord that they were "rewarded" with the consoling and empowering faith in the reality of the resurrection.

He saw no one and he believed. This is because the one he did not see had already risen. What he did see was the way the linen that wrapped Jesus' dead body was "flattened" instead of being unrolled, as suggested by some scholars. It was as if the resurrected body passed through the linen cloths, like how He passed through doors. The beloved disciple saw beyond the empty tomb to recognise the reality of the resurrection. Only love can open eyes.

No Resurrection, No Christianity!

Christ coming back from the dead was not a resuscitation, or a mere coming back to the old life that He lived, but it was the resurrection, which brought about a New Creation with new life. This is the life that we embrace and enjoy right now.

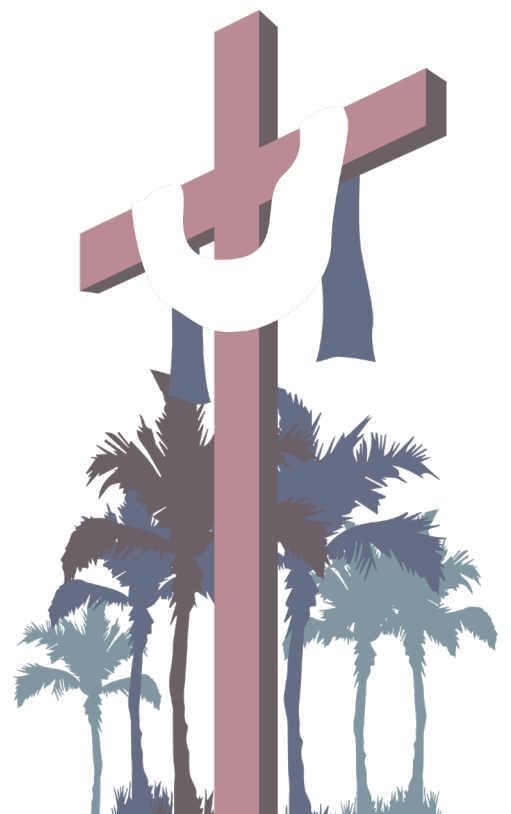
Granted, we may not feel this “new life” at times, especially in times of trial, illnesses, anxiety, isolation and loss, which is probably why St. Paul incisively points out that this life may seem “hidden”. However, the reality of this new life in the Risen Christ is more than our feelings. What we feel does not make things real, or conversely, what we don’t feel does not make the reality less real. Reality is reality. We must come before it and embrace it, as it is.

Easter is this time for us to face the reality of who the risen Christ is, and what it means for us as disciples of this risen Lord. If this new life is already ours, then how is Jesus inviting us to deepen our understanding of this mystery and to open our very lives to the effects of this Paschal Mystery?

We could be trapped with our own understanding of scripture but now that we “see” the reality of the new “heavenly” life offered with Christ in God our Father, and we see the reality of our existential

“earthly” lives, we are invited and indeed challenged to hold these two “seeings” in tension and in fact, to let the heavenly realities be more real and more present, especially in times of earthly stumblings.

How do we do this? We could learn to let our minds race to the empty tomb and to allow our minds to scan the tomb, and not focus on seeing that there is no one there. Can we also scan the History of Salvation that Peter has beautifully summarised in his *kerygma* and see our own history in God’s plan? We belong to this history that continues to unfold and now with our risen Lord, this unfolding takes on a piercingly fresh vision that pulls the blinders from the eyes of our hearts, to finally recognise that God our Father desires to be in communion with us, and He spares no effort in to making this a reality. This reality is the Paschal Mystery. May this Mystery be unraveled in a lived and living reality of our lives.



REFLECTIONS

Personal Reflection & Sharing Questions

Take time to reflect on the following, then share if you are in a group.

What struck you from the Scripture passages? What stirs your heart? Remain with it for a while.

Which part about the Resurrection amazes me and which part am I struggling with the most?

How does the Resurrection of Christ continue to impact my lived Christian life today?

Supplementary Questions

You may wish to reflect on one of the following questions according to your context.

For Small Christian Communities

The disciple that Jesus loved, 'saw and believed'. What do you believe about the resurrection of the Lord?

What is it that you need to see and believe in your life?

How would you explain it to someone who is not a believer?

For Ministries

Has the Easter celebration given new life to my ministry?

In what ways will our ministry and service of others flow from our faith in the Risen Lord?

For Families

Peter proclaimed the kerygma to Cornelius and his household, and they believed and were converted.

Is my own household open to the ongoing proclamation of the risen Lord, through the words and works from our own family members?

How is my household called to proclaim the Good News of the resurrection as one?

Take Home

The Paschal Mystery reveals our Father's constant and loving presence through Jesus our risen Lord.

Doing Your Bit

Think of a few friends who would be willing enough to do something for the risen Lord. Pray to the Lord about these friends and ask the Lord to touch them.

CLOSING PRAYER

Father of all life, Jesus Christ coming back from the dead was not a resuscitation, a mere coming back to the old life that He lived, but it was the resurrection, which brought about a New Creation with new life. This is the life that we embrace and enjoy right now for we recognise that You desire to be in communion with us. We thank you for this deep love you have for us and for this opportunity to realise who we are to you. Amen. Alleluia.



MY EASTER REFLECTION JOURNAL

The
Word
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2ND SUNDAY OF EASTER

The Word Gives Peace

OPENING PRAYER

Father, God of peace, You have redeemed us through the death and resurrection of Your Son, and given us new life. May we always rejoice with gratefulness at the bountiful redemption that You offer us. As we profess our faith in the risen Christ, fill us with the zeal to share this Good News with the wounded world in need of Your love. We ask this in the most holy name of Jesus. Amen.

READINGS

1ST READING:

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES 5:12-16

'Yet more than ever, great numbers of men and women, were added to them.'

Acts is a book that tells the story of the early church. It gives us a model and example of how church is meant to be. More than that, it is the story of how God our Father used instruments like Peter and Paul to carry on the mission of Jesus and to build the community of disciples. The Holy Spirit was definitely at work in the early days of the church. One gift that the Holy Spirit gives the disciples is the gift of healing. People carried the sick onto the streets and even Peter's shadow was enough to cure them.

The Acts of the Apostles reminds us that it is God our Father who grants the growth, while we are just instruments.

2ND READING: REV 1:9-13, 17-19

What can we make of the Book of Revelation with all its bizarre symbols, images and characters? What does all of it mean? Some traditions in the church seem to give simplistic answers to what these images represent. Today's reading is from the prologue of the book – where the writer, John, is instructed to write down everything that he has seen.

Revelation is a book written in troubled times. The Jewish people had repeatedly

suffered horrible persecution. They had been slaves in Egypt, they had been invaded and taken into exile by the Assyrians and Babylonians. Jerusalem and the Temple had been destroyed and they had suffered under the Greek Seleucid Empire who tried to erase their faith and culture. Yet, they overcame these persecutions and held on to their faith in the God of Israel. Revelation uses apocalyptic imagery to give courage to the Christians who are now facing oppression.

GOSPEL: JOHN 20:19-31

Jesus appeared to the disciples and He says 'Shalom – Peace be with you.' It might be a greeting that we expect from Jesus but that's not how the disciples felt at the time. We are told that they were locked in a room out of fear of the Jews. The disciples were afraid because they believed that the same people who captured and crucified Jesus would come after them next and they would meet the same fate as Him. Instead, Jesus gives them the Holy Spirit along with the power to forgive sins and sends them to continue His mission. Were they transformed? Not really. Because we are told that *'a week later, his disciples were again inside.'* They were still locked in the room in fear. So, what would it take to help them overcome their fear? They would need to come to faith in Jesus as their Lord and God.

THOUGHTS

In the year 2000, Pope John Paul II designated the Second Sunday of Easter as Sunday of the Divine Mercy. It seeks to emphasise what we have celebrated – the Passion, Death and Resurrection of the Lord – a reminder of God’s wish that all people be saved. Most of all, the Second Sunday of Easter is noted for this Gospel reading featuring Thomas. Doubting Thomas, who said that he would not believe that Jesus had risen from the dead until he saw for himself and touched His wounds. It would seem that faith and doubt are opposites. To doubt is not to have faith and if our faith is strong, then we should never doubt. Is that true?

However, Thomas never said that I will never believe. He said, *“I will not believe until I see for myself.”* After he meets the risen Christ, he does believe. Thomas proclaims, *“My Lord and my God.”*

What do we find hard to believe? Do we find it hard to believe that the difficulties and struggles that we are experiencing in our work or relationships can be resolved? Do we find it hard to believe that the pandemic will end? Do we find it hard to believe that our church will be able to follow the model of the Acts of the Apostles, wounded as we are by division and politics? Do we, like Thomas, say *“until I see for myself, I will not believe?”* However, Jesus says, *“Happy are those who have not seen and yet believe.”*

The risen Lord is in our midst too. He says, *“Shalom,” – “Peace be with you.” “I have risen, I have conquered sin and the world, receive the Holy Spirit, I am sending you out to continue my mission and be instruments of salvation to all.”*



REFLECTIONS

Personal Reflection & Sharing Questions

Take time to reflect on the following, then share if you are in a group.

What struck you from the Scripture passages? What stirs your heart? Remain with it for a while.

Do I give in to despair when things do not appear to be going well? Does this mean that I lack faith in God?

How can I come to faith in Jesus as my Lord and God?

Supplementary Questions

You may wish to reflect on one of the following questions according to your context.

For Small Christian Communities

Thomas was traumatised by the cruel death of Jesus. He was not with the community. Do you know of those who are not part of your community because they have had a terrible experience of the Church?

Is there a need to recognise, to 'know again' these people?

Share your experience of how you had overcome a trauma in your life to believe once again.

What does it mean to be filled with Easter peace?

For Ministries

The early Church was persecuted in many places. They pushed on with the Word. Has the Easter celebration shown peace in the ministry?

During this Easter season, what Words have given peace in the ministry?

For Families

Are your family members messengers of Easter peace in the family?

Is there fear in proclaiming the Good News to one another in the family?

Take Home

Jesus appears to His disciples and greets them with the sign of peace. After which, He encourages and empowers them to continue His mission – to share this reconciling peace with others.

Doing Your Bit

Invite these friends over for a meal or fellowship. Tell them your plans of telling someone or some people about the risen Lord. Discuss with them what can possibly be done.

Here is a suggestion or two:

1. Look for a movie that will bring across the notion of new life or hope. Then prepare a discussion on the movie and bring in the risen Lord into the discussion with the persons you would want to tell something about Jesus.
2. Prepare with your friends the answer with regard to the meaning of life and how you are going to talk to this person(s) about it.

CLOSING PRAYER

Father God of mercy, we give You thanks because Your love is everlasting. In these tumultuous times where some are put to death because of their faith in the risen Lord, while others are confronted with contrary views or facing opposition to the faith, we are ever thankful for the power of the risen Lord to assist us to overcome these trials. May our lives be a sign of this redemption and make us Your instruments to lead others to experience this risen Lord. We ask this through Jesus Christ and in the Holy Spirit. Amen. Alleluia.



MY EASTER REFLECTION JOURNAL

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3RD SUNDAY OF EASTER

Recognising the Word

OPENING PRAYER

Father, God of all creation, You have renewed all life through the resurrection of Your Son. We are grateful for such a wonderful gift. Draw us forward, away from limited certainty, into the immense world of Your love; for it is there that we will discover the peace to live with uncertainty, questions and doubts. To experience the resurrection anew with open wonder will enable us to see You in the people of Easter. Amen.

READINGS

1ST READING:

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES 5:27-32, 40-41

It was quite an amazing transformation for the apostles from being unsure and afraid after Jesus' crucifixion to testifying boldly for Him despite being jailed and threatened. This journey that the apostles took from fear to courage is a journey of realising who Jesus Christ is - the Saviour who came, died and rose. Equally important is that Peter and the apostles, moved by the Holy Spirit understood what it meant for them and the whole of humanity - that we have an eternal future with God our Father which results from living in right and loving relationships! This conviction motivated them to declare boldly "*We must obey God rather than men*" and to rejoice because they also recognised that blessings come through suffering for the Lord.

2ND READING: REVELATION 5:11-14

Christ's glory as the Lamb of God is worthy of our highest worship as we do for God the Father. In John's vision, we see the heavenly beings paying homage to the Lamb in recognition of His position in the Godhead and sharing in God the Father's attributes of power, riches, wisdom, strength, honour, glory and blessing. Aware of this recognition the whole universe, from the spiritual and invisible to the material and visible, all beings worship God the Father with the Lamb and the Holy Spirit. We see a glimpse of the future we desire to be in; a world where God reigns over all.

GOSPEL: JOHN 21:1-19

Trying to deal with the aftermath of the death of their rabbi and master Jesus Christ, Peter and the other disciples went back to the life that they were familiar with - fishing. It was in the midst of their disappointments and disillusionment that Jesus came and called them.

The comforting recognition of the apostle John words: "*It is the Lord*" marks the beginning of seeing their rabbi Jesus with fresh eyes, especially for Peter. This is seen in the later conversation between Jesus and Peter. The Lord asked Peter three times 'do you love me'. Not always apparent in English translations, the first two times Jesus asked the question 'do you love me,' the Greek translation for the word 'love' is the word '*agapao*' which means heroic love. However, Peter's reciprocation of love to all three of Jesus' questions is translated as '*phileo*' in Greek, which has the meaning of 'friendly affection'. The word '*phileo*' is used in Jesus' third question to Peter indicating that our Lord Jesus accepted Peter's 'friendly affection' but really had in mind for Peter to come into an intense heroic love with Him.

THOUGHTS

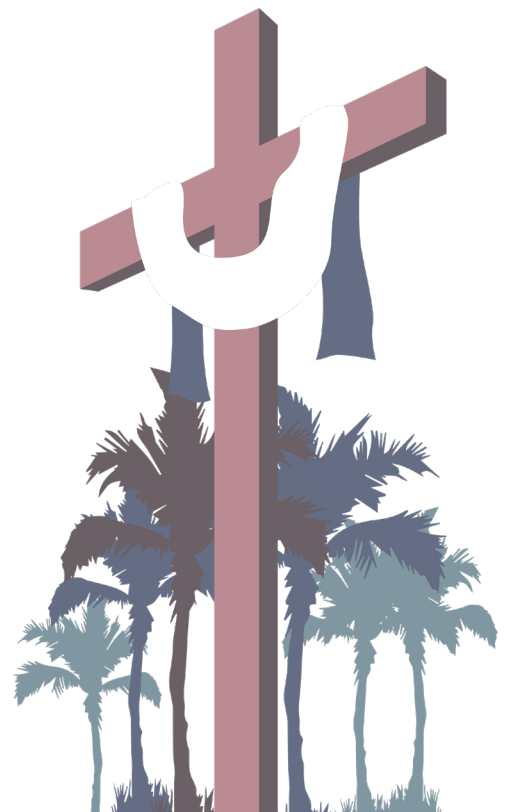
The Latin word of “*recognise*” is ‘*recognoscere*’. It means to recall to mind, to know again. This concept of ‘knowing again’ aptly describes Peter’s journey with Jesus in this week’s reading. In the Gospels, we are told that Peter started to follow our Lord Jesus after his brother Andrew spoke about the Messiah. What a journey it has been!

The Peter we see from the first reading is also vastly different from the earlier Peter at the Sea of Galilee in this Sunday’s Gospel. After having witnessed the death and resurrection of his rabbi, Peter was experiencing a re-discovering of the Jesus he had followed for three years while still trying to understand the incredible events that were unfolding before his very eyes. In his limited capacity, he could only respond with ‘*phileo*’ - a friendly affection to Jesus’ invitation of a heroic love - ‘*agapao*’.

When we later encounter Peter in the first reading from the Acts of the Apostles, his transformation is very apparent. No longer moved by mere friendly affection, Peter

was now driven by a heroic love for the Lord expressed in his bold proclaiming of the Good News of salvation! Helped by the Holy Spirit, the journey to know Jesus again has moved Peter as he is now able to see the eternal future with God and do what the Lord instructed with exceptional courage and boldness. This future is where all of creation is in perfect worship of God our Father, eternally in the Kingdom.

We are reminded that as we sojourn on to the Kingdom, we are invited to continually ‘recognise’ and discover who Jesus is and what we are called to do - to love Him and others heroically. This invitation is not just at Easter, but is given by Jesus daily for He desires so much for us to love Him and love others in this intense heroic manner. What will your response be?



REFLECTIONS

Personal Reflection & Sharing Questions

Take time to reflect on the following, then share if you are in a group.

What struck you from the Scripture passages? What stirs your heart? Remain with it for a while.

What does it mean concretely for you to 'obey God rather than men'? Are you willing and ready to pay the price to love Jesus Christ with a heroic love?

Supplementary Questions

You may wish to reflect on one of the following questions according to your context.

For Small Christian Communities

Are there areas in your life where you think you will be tempted to return to how it was before the Lenten season?

In what area of your life in this Easter season has Jesus been challenging you to love without conditions?

For Ministries

There was a change in the apostles as they went boldly to speak about the Good News. What changes can be seen in our ministry because we are celebrating Easter?

How do we recognise the Word in our ministering?

For Families

Has the family gone back to the old ways or is the new life still continuing to grow?

Do you recognise the new life in the other family members?

How can you encourage this new life to grow?

Take Home

Recognising who Jesus Christ is and realising the relationship He offers will propel us to deeper union with the Lord.

Doing Your Bit

Gather your friends and pray for this person(s) you are going to invite for the movie or discussion. Continue discussing about what the group will do and say with the invited person(s).

CLOSING PRAYER

Father, You who brought the wonderful reality of a new life in Christ to us, we are grateful that these graces of Your Son's resurrection prevents us from succumbing to the pressures and the distractions of this life which constantly draws us back to our old way of life. We rejoice in You, our risen Lord, for Your intense heroic love for all humankind. By Your love may we continue in faith and hope to be witnesses and examples of right living and right loving. Amen. Alleluia.



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WE NEED YOUR FEEDBACK

Thanks for using this booklet so far! Has the booklet been easy to use? We would really love to hear from you. What could have made your experience better? Let us know!



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4TH SUNDAY OF EASTER

The Word for All

OPENING PRAYER

Father of our Lord Jesus, we thank You for this opportunity to reflect on Your word that is meant for all mankind. Through Your word, we are aware of Your great love for all peoples and You have come to speak to all. We take this opportunity to know more about Your word to honour the great work of the resurrection of Your Son. We make this prayer through our resurrected Lord. Amen.

READINGS

1ST READING:

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES 13:14, 43-52

During his apostolic missions, Paul always prioritised his fellow Jews in his evangelical work. He was convinced that the word of God should be preached to Israel first, as Jesus did during His ministry. While there were Jews who believed in the Lord Jesus, others reacted negatively to the apostles' preaching by persecuting and deriding them. The Jews' reaction was contrasted by the enthusiastic reception of the word of God by the Gentiles. As such, Paul warned the Jews when they rejected the gospel, that they were denying themselves of the promise of eternal life. Although the gentiles were not originally the chosen people of God, Paul made it clear that they too, were worthy of God's saving grace. God our Father does not discriminate between His beloved children. Grace is offered freely and abundantly to all who respond in faith.

2ND READING:

REVELATION 7:9, 14-17

This vision of heaven depicts a multitude of people from all nations continually worshipping and praising God before His throne; the Kingdom of God in its fullness. Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God gathered a people who have remained

faithful despite trials and sufferings, they have been made right before God our Father. Our Father 'will shelter them with His presence' (v.15). The word 'shelter' here in Greek is 'skenoo' meaning 'to dwell', 'to pitch a tent'. This is a familiar image from the Old Testament where God our Father dwelled among the Israelites as they sojourned to the promise land. In the fullness of God's kingdom, the deep desire of God our Father is fulfilled where He spread His tent to cover the multitude of His children gathered and made clean by the Lamb.

GOSPEL: JOHN 10:27-30

Jesus describes His relationship with His believers using imagery of a shepherd who looks after his sheep. Like the shepherd, Jesus knows each of His sheep personally, claiming them as His own possessions. Only those that listen to His voice and willingly follow Him can become members of His flock. Jesus states that He and His Father are one. Having the same sovereign power as God our Father, Jesus is able to protect His flock from the snares of the evil one. This protection will be for all who believes and follow Jesus, and a promise that 'no one can steal them from God our Father and Jesus.'

THOUGHTS

A popular motivational quote of our time goes like this – “We create our own destiny”. It highlights the power of free will in making decisions that can change the course of our own lives. While this mantra of self-reliance may appear attractive on the surface, it crumbles when we encounter personal crises and find ourselves helpless in the face of circumstances beyond our control. These are opportunities for us to realise the fragility of our human will and for us to turn to the voice deep within that there is something more.

The mission of Jesus Christ is to have all creation live eternally in right relationship where our Father will pitch a tent and dwell among His creatures. Jesus Christ, the Word was sent as His plan to gather a people and bring them to the fullness of life as He is ‘the way, the truth and the life’. (John 14:6) The call of Jesus Christ will be heard by those who acknowledge that they cannot find fullness on their own

and hence accept the relationship with the Word of God. The Word continues to draw all people to God our Father in fulfilment of the great plan of salvation.

Although Jesus’ call goes out to all, not everyone will respond to the voice of the shepherd. Many of us remain stuck in the trappings of this world, unable to refuse earthly attachments and to endure the difficulties that accompany a life in Christ. Even though Jesus provides us with the promise that He will always be there to shelter and protect all the members of His flock, it still requires a response from our part. It begins with accepting that we cannot attain fullness on our own. Only when we accept the call of Jesus Christ, we can grow our relationship with Him. Through Him and together with all the others, we are brought to the fullness of life before God our Father.



REFLECTIONS

Personal Reflection & Sharing Questions

Take time to reflect on the following, then share if you are in a group.

What struck you from the Scripture passages? What stirs your heart? Remain with it for a while.

Are you able to recognise the voice of Jesus amidst the distractions in your life? What can you do to better discern God's presence in all things?

Supplementary Questions

You may wish to reflect on one of the following questions according to your context.

For Small Christian Communities

When was the last time the community collectively heard the voice of the Shepherd?

Do the concerns of the community drown out the voice of the Shepherd?

For Ministries

Is there a need for a Shepherd in your ministry? Who is the Shepherd that you recognise in your ministry?

Does your ministry ground itself on the Word of God?

How is the ministry faring so far in living the new life of Easter?

For Families

Does the family pray for more vocations to the priesthood and religious life?

Has the family begun to read the Word of God during this Easter season?

Take Home

Jesus the Good Shepherd leads us up mountains and through valleys, never abandoning us.

Doing Your Bit

Invite the person(s) to your home and carry out what you have planned. It is pertinent to remember to listen to what this invited person(s) are saying rather than just getting your points across. Listening is what Jesus did with the disciples on the road to Emmaus.

CLOSING PRAYER

Loving Father, we thank You for Jesus, our risen Lord, our good Shepherd. We thank You for His sacrificial love and Your protection for all of us. May we constantly seek to know and imitate You in Your ways, so that we may one day find our rest in Your eternal pasture. Amen. Alleluia.



MY EASTER REFLECTION JOURNAL

The
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5TH SUNDAY OF EASTER

*The Word
ever new*

OPENING PRAYER

Dear Heavenly Father, as we continue to celebrate this glorious season of Easter, rejoicing in the victory over sin and death which Your Son Jesus Christ won for us, we relive Easter each time to meditate and live Your Word intentionally in our lives because Your Word is alive, active and ever new. Amen.

READINGS

1ST READING:

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES 14:21-27

This passage shows the dynamism of the word of God in the early Church, as Paul and his companion, Barnabas, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, make energetic trips to cities of the ancient world to establish new Christian communities and strengthen recently established ones.

Not only do the two apostles proclaim God's word in places like Derbe and Perga, they continue to encourage the early Christians in cities such as Lystra, Iconium and Antioch in Pisidia. They also appoint presbyters or religious elders to care for these churches. The passage demonstrates how Paul and Barnabas realise the importance of constant catechesis (*the teaching of God's word*) in growing the early Church.

They also realise the importance of being accountable to the Christian community that had sent them to proclaim God's word to the non-believers, people who are not Jews. The passage recounts them returning to the community in Antioch in Syria to relate all they had done and crediting their success to God.

2ND READING: REVELATION 21:1-5

The Book of Revelation abounds in symbolism and was aimed at encouraging and comforting the early Christians who were persecuted by the Romans. Here, God's word that is ever new, is powerfully evoked as the Christians are urged to hope in God's eternal kingdom at the end of time – the “new heaven” and “new earth” – when evil and suffering are destroyed forever. God our Father will overturn the current order of things and restore joy and peace to His people – *“Behold, I make all things new.”*

God's kingdom is not only in the hereafter, as the author of Revelation notes in his description of the “new Jerusalem” but in the present reality even though it is not felt and seen. The ancient city of Jerusalem has long been regarded as a sign of God's presence with the Jews – He had aided them in making it their capital, building their Temple there. In the passage of today, the “new Jerusalem” becomes a symbol of the Church, the bride of Christ, to whom God is ever present (*“Behold, God's dwelling is with the human race.”*). Thus, this passage gives hope to the early Christians by showing God's closeness to them and how He continues to renew His Church even during its sufferings.

GOSPEL: JOHN 13:31-35

This passage forms part of what is known as Jesus' “*Farewell Discourse*”, words spoken by Him to His disciples before His death. Here, God's word that is ever new comes into sharp focus as Jesus gives His disciples a “new commandment” that they must love one another as He has loved them. This is how the world will be able to recognise them as His disciples.

This command nevertheless has a forerunner in Leviticus 19:18, in which God our Father tells the Israelites to “*love your neighbour as yourself*”. What is new here, however, is the emphasis that such a love is the hallmark of the new life offered by Jesus, living proof of the way of life that He has instituted. This new commandment calls for love without limits, conditions or prerequisites which is very different from what the world understands about love. It is a love that is demonstrated by service and sacrifice, as shown in Jesus' own sacrifice on the cross for humanity.

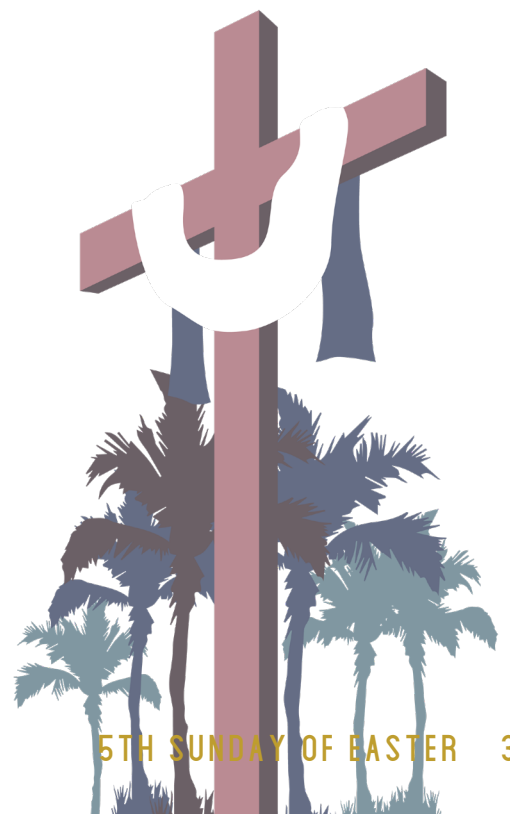
THOUGHTS

The word “new” appears several times in today’s readings, apparently to underscore the newness of life that Christ gives to His people through His passion, death and resurrection. It is a life that has, as its distinguishing characteristic, unconditional love for one another as stated by Christ in the Gospel reading; a love which extends towards bringing others into God’s kingdom, as seen in Paul and Barnabas’ missionary journeys; and in God our Father’s assurance that He will always be with His people, especially at the end of time when He will “wipe every tear from their eyes”.

This love that runs through these readings is agape love, the love of God our Father for His people and the human reciprocal love for God which necessarily extends to a selfless love for one’s fellow human beings (*“As I have loved you, so you also should love one another” – John 13:34*). This is seen in the witness of martyrs, the lives of the saints and in the ordinary people who live and love daily, making small and large sacrifices for others.

The three readings thus invite us to reflect on how we are living Jesus’ “new commandment” in our lives – whether we are moved by Christ’s love to share His word of hope with others regardless of the obstacles, whether we are ready to put others before ourselves in our Christian communities, and whether we forgive readily when hurt by others. Such *agape* love was what caused Tertullian, an early Roman theologian, to make this comment about the early Christians: *“Look how they love one another.”*

It is precisely by our being an agape-filled people that the new heaven and earth, the “new Jerusalem”, can begin to exist – not at some unknown time and place, but here and now. All we have to do is follow the example of Jesus, Lord of the Resurrection.



REFLECTIONS

Personal Reflection & Sharing Questions

Take time to reflect on the following, then share if you are in a group.

What struck you from the passages of scripture? What stirs your heart? Remain with it for a while.

In order to better love others, I also need to be able to love myself. What are some areas that I find difficult to love about myself?

In this season of Easter, ask God our Father to help you see yourself as how He sees you, and help you to love yourself as He does.

Supplementary Questions

You may wish to reflect on one of the following questions according to your context.

For Small Christian Communities

What are the challenges preventing the community from loving one another in a deeper way?

What is preventing us from a closer bond with one another?

For Ministries

How do we show God's agape love to the people we serve in our ministries in new and creative ways?

How can we go the extra mile in bringing God's Word to them?

Has the celebration of Easter peace and joy brought us closer to one another?

For Families

Are there any areas in which we can do better in loving and forgiving one another in our families so that we can show more clearly the love of the risen Lord?

Does the Word of God inspire us this Easter season to grow the new life we have been given?

Take Home

There is a scripture verse for every occasion to lead us to new sights.

Doing Your Bit

Discuss with your friends how the encounter went. Discuss if you would like to do it once again.

CLOSING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, to love one another as Jesus loves us is definitely not easy. We can only do this with Your grace and mercy. Fill us with Your power and love so that we can go forth to be effective witnesses of Your Gospel of love, so that Your Word will reach to the ends of the earth. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Alleluia.



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6TH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Remembering the Word

OPENING PRAYER

Father, You who are the fullness of love, have called us here and now to remember Your word. You are ever-present in our reality to constantly direct us. Open our eyes, our minds and our hearts, so that we may experience Jesus our risen Lord more and more in order to live as You want us to live. May this gathering transform us to be fully alive in You. Amen.

READINGS

1ST READING:

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES 15:1-2, 22-29

In the first reading, the question of circumcision becomes a divisive issue in deciding whether one is saved. It triggers the important and necessary debate on whether tradition prevails over innovation, and whether peace as a goal of community should trump over principle. This ultimately addresses the question of belonging – who decides?

This is clearly a matter of grace, as Judas and Silas assert that the Holy Spirit impresses upon the leaders that they should not impose any further burdens on believers other than some essential observances. After all, God the Father has fulfilled His covenant with Israel in sending Jesus as the Messiah, and this act of love and mercy invites all into the covenantal family with no distinction. This promise was not to be hoarded as an exclusive and private possession. In fact, this posture of inclusivity was what tradition has been all about.

2ND READING:

REVELATION 21:10-14, 22-23

The second reading presents a vision of hope, and one that is not just a future reality but can already be glimpsed in the present. Jesus is this future reality, the One who lived, died and rose again and presently reigns in glory. We are comforted by this hope because God our Father, out of sheer mercy, will come and dwell with His people, and that mercy will flow out and wash across the whole world.

One striking observation is that the new city has no temple; that is because God the Father is always present there. This powerful vision reminds us that buildings do not make a Church. What makes a Church is the presence of Jesus Christ among the people of God. God Himself shines as the light in this new city, to help us to see things the way God the Father sees them.

GOSPEL: JOHN 14:23-29

In the Gospel passage, Jesus connects love and peace. Love is freely given and demands responsible action. A Christian loves Jesus because Jesus first loved them. True reception of Christ's love means a return and demonstration of that love. Living the love of Christ opens the heart towards spiritual union, so that Father and Son can come and dwell. To help His followers, the Holy Spirit will remind them of what Jesus had said and done, in order that they may imitate Him. God our Father's presence will allow the disciples to experience a peace that assures them of Jesus' presence and support always. During those times, under Roman rule, peace was built upon ruthless oppression. Jesus as the source of peace will guide His followers amidst conflict and confusion because His peace is counter cultural. The peace Jesus offers is a grounding and steadfast peace.

We go through transitions in life. There are times when we are invited to die to what has been familiar, to embrace a new reality. These are often difficult and confusing times. In the Gospel passage, Jesus prepares His disciples for a major transition when He will no longer be around.

During transitions, such as the recent pandemic, we are often thrown into chaos and confusion. We lose our bearings in what has been familiar. As we try to regain control over our lives, our individual grappling with what makes and grounds us may unveil divisive attitudes and behaviours. These force us to struggle as a community. This Sunday's readings provide much fodder for reflection and when grounded on the Word, hope becomes real as we navigate life's transitions.

The first reading invites us to consider the choice of principle or worldly peace, of individual freedom or collective good. In a time of desolation, we look inward and tend towards the self. However, we are invited to be other-centered and to look at the wider reality in order to counter desolation. Where is God in all of this? The early believers clung on to traditional practices as the gateway for inclusion, losing sight of God our Father's plan which was to welcome all in the covenant family through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Transitions can close us in if we focus on how to save the old ways or

old self. As we examine ways of behaviour that tend towards excluding others, we would do well to ask ourselves if God our Father discriminates, or instead invites all to the banquet. What should your action be?

When we lose sight of the familiar, we may also lose sight of God. Ignatian spirituality invites us to find God in all things and challenges us to consider how big our God is. Do I put God in a box and confine Him within the four walls of a church, or within the walls of my own expectations? Can I let God be God and trust that God is present even in the chaos and confusion, beckoning me towards a new beginning?

As we confront turmoil in our hearts, where is the source of our peace?

"Earthly peace is the image and fruit of the peace of Christ, the messianic 'Prince of Peace' ... 'He is our peace, He has declared: 'Blessed are the peacemakers.'"

Catechism of the Catholic Church, para 2305

Jesus offers us the peace that the world cannot give. As we navigate the churning waters of transition, what helps us to keep an even keel? Are we grasping at whatever offers us momentary peace, or do we return to what grounds us in a lasting peace that gives life? Do we return to God's promises in the Word that is active and alive?

REFLECTIONS

Personal Reflection & Sharing Questions

Take time to reflect on the following, then share if you are in a group.

What struck you from the Scripture passages? What stirs your heart? Remain with it for a while.

When I am faced with transition, what grounds me?

What prevents me from being thrown off by the unexpected detours, and threatens to make me lose my identity?

What might I need to let go, in order to embrace the new life God is inviting me towards?

Supplementary Questions

You may wish to reflect on one of the following questions according to your context.

For Small Christian Communities

What needs to die in this community for us to be a more loving and inclusive community?

What is the hope this community offers to its members and to the larger neighbourhood?

For Ministries

In times of transition, how might my ministry remain God-centered in order to navigate change?

Do we see this transition as the new life of Easter?

How can we find and maintain a peace that grounds us in the midst of change?

For Families

What do family members remember at this time of celebrating new life?

How often do members dwell in the pain of the past as compared to the joy the risen Lord gives?

In what ways can we be life giving this Easter?

Take Home

Remembering His Word is remembering His everlasting love.

Doing Your Bit

Think about the person(s) at the discussion and pray for that person. Next, write a card or a note to that person(s) saying how you felt about the evening and be sure to include a scripture text.

CLOSING PRAYER

Dearest Father, thank You for the gift of Your love which has given us new life. In this world of shifting sand, only Your Word is constant and true, directing us through the many twists and turns in life. It is in these troubling times that You come to us as a gentle breeze that we need but often overlooked by us because we are looking for something that addresses our expectations and not concerned with Your thoughts and ways. Help us to keep our focus on You, especially when we are so easily distracted during times of uncertainty. We make this prayer through our risen Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen. Alleluia!



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7TH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Being One with the Word

OPENING PRAYER

Father, even as You are one with our Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit, You call us to be one by dwelling in Your word. As we read and reflect on Your words, we discover the depth of Your love. May Your word be with us in our minds and our hearts so that every thought, word, and deed of ours will be directed by You, and that we can become one with You. Amen.

READINGS

1ST READING:

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES 7:55-60

St. Stephen is often referred to as the protomartyr, the first martyr of the Christian church. The word 'martyr' is Greek for 'witness' and St. Stephen has been recognised as being the first to give testimony of the truth of God our Father's glory in Jesus. What's particularly inspiring in this event is that he gave witness in words and in deed. His prayers for those persecuting him echoes that of Jesus on the cross.

We are also called to be witnesses to the glory of God our Father in our daily lives, always speaking of the Lord's presence in our lives and seeking to act in ways that are consistent with His teachings.

2ND READING:

REVELATION 22:12-14, 16-17, 20

The author of the book of Revelation heard Jesus calling Himself "*the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.*" This can be understood as Jesus, who is God, being the source of life and our salvation – the Alpha or the beginning. He is also the goal to whom we are all moving towards, one whom we model our lives after – the Omega or the end. This knowledge of where we come from and where we are

going gives us comfort because it is the Lord who gives us the foundation and our goal of life.

In a similar way, recognising that we all share this common foundation and goal allows us to see the basis for unity in our communities and in the Church, that we are all bound together by our faith in Jesus who is the beginning and end. He is our focal point.

GOSPEL: JOHN 17:20-26

These verses come at the end of what is commonly referred to as the *Farewell Discourse*, instructions and prayers that Jesus gave to His disciples during the Last Supper. We hear Jesus praying for His disciples and the church, exhorting us all to believe in Him and to stay united. God is made known to the world through the oneness or the unity of those who believe because our communion and faith would reflect the union that Jesus has with His Father.

In a similar way, our communion is also a sharing in God's glory as we grow in love for each other, a love that reflects God's love for us and which lies at the heart of our ability to be good witnesses of the Lord in our lives.

THOUGHTS

The word ‘communion’ is often used interchangeably with ‘Holy Communion’ when referring to the reception of the sacrament at the Eucharist. We might not think about the use of these words too often but the readings for this week directs us to take a deeper look at what communion might mean to us.

Jesus prayed that we all become one as He is one with His Father, so that the world can see the divine unity through our own earthly communion. This might seem like a tall order but we don’t have to look further than our gathering together to worship the Lord to see the reality of this in our lives. At Eucharist, we remember Christ’s sacrifice that led to our salvation and we gather as a community around His table to partake of the life-giving Body and Blood. Jesus, who is the foundation and the goal of our faith, is present with us at the table, allowing us to truly become “*one body, one spirit, in Christ.*”

The beauty of our communion is that it begins with our encounter with the Lord in the Eucharist. This encounter should inspire us to want to share this glory with others, just as St. Stephen did. Our communion does not end in church but extends out to the world as we are called to bring the love that we feel outwards to those who are most in need of it. This need has been felt strongly in the past years, where the pandemic has made us more aware of the need to care for our neighbours, to show kindness, and in so doing, bring the glory of God to the world.

As our celebration of Easter draws to a close, let’s make or renew this commitment: to build the community of faithful that we are already in and to share the love and glory of the Lord so that we can become effective witnesses of our Easter joy to the world.



REFLECTIONS

Personal Reflection & Sharing Questions

Take time to reflect on the following, then share if you are in a group.

What struck you from the Scripture passages? What stirs your heart? Remain with it for a while.

As you reflect on your past week, what is one encounter that moved you and reminded you of the Lord's presence in your life? Share it with the rest.

What is one commitment you can take to grow in "oneness" with the Lord?

Supplementary Questions

You may wish to reflect on one of the following questions according to your context.

For Small Christian Communities

To live as the Easter Community, there is a need to witness to Easter joy. How do we live this joy within our community?

Having read and reflected on the Word of God, we consider the ways in which Scripture helps us to build our community, to bring us to greater unity.

What is the place of the Word of God in the life of our community?

How can we as a community encourage one another to know, live and share the Word of God?

For Ministries

Has the Word of God been central in our ministry?

Does the Word of God unite us in our mission?

As Easter is drawing to a close, has the new life continued to grow strongly?

For Families

Have the Easter celebrations made us more aware of the need to be one in the Word?

Are we encouraging one another with the Word of God to live the new life of Easter?

Take Home

Be united with the Word and a community will be born and nurtured.

Doing Your Bit

Call the person(s) and ask if they would like to have another time together to talk about the risen Lord.

CLOSING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, You who dwell in the perfect community of the Trinity continue to bid us to live as one community of believers. Father, You continue to inspire us towards this direction through the Word. There is no greater way to give You honour than to live as a community. As we struggle because of our brokenness and distractions, we turn to Jesus our risen Lord, to once again show us the way, to overcome death and sin, and to be an example for others to know You and our Saviour through the Holy Spirit, God forever and ever. Amen. Alleluia.



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PENTECOST SUNDAY

The Word Gives Life

OPENING PRAYER

Father, Living God, the Holy Spirit descended upon our ancestors in faith and gave birth to the Church. We praise You for remaining with us and guiding us through all this time according to Your plan. Awaken the charisms You have endowed the Church so that we will walk the path laid before us in the footsteps of Christ our Lord. Through Your grace, let the Church continue to ford the generations as the unfailing beacon of Your presence, until that last day when the worldly and heavenly assembly of faith unites in Your glory. Amen.

READINGS

1ST READING:

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES 2:1-11

Fifty days after the first Sabbath following Passover, the Jewish religion observes the Feast of Weeks, *hag Shavuot*, which was traditionally rendered in Greek as *pentekostes*. This feast took on extra significance in the early community of Jesus and has been popularly commemorated in Catholicism as the ‘birthday of the Church’.

While not all biblical scholars are in agreement with the historical details of the Christian Pentecost as narrated in the Acts of the Apostles, there is consensus about the central role that the Holy Spirit played in the life of the first Christians, which foreshadowed the universal nature of Christ’s Church.

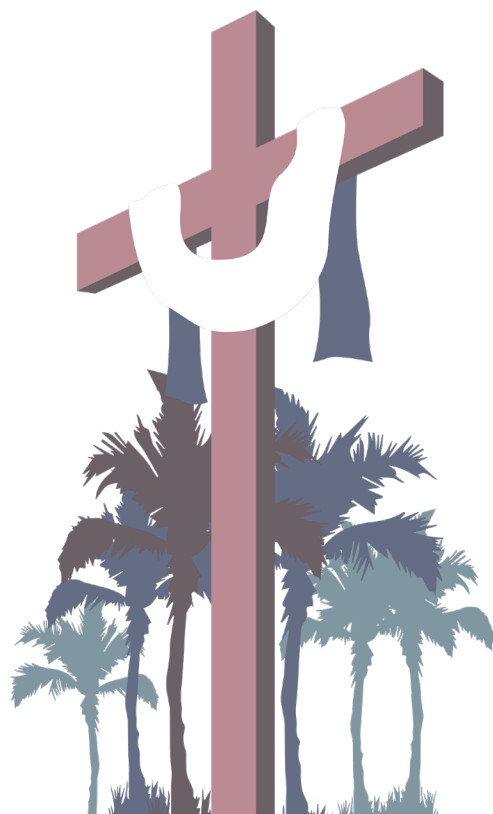
2ND READING: ROMANS 8:8-17

For Paul, the Christian looks beyond this world to find his or her fulfilment in God our Father. Being a person of faith is to allow God’s Holy Spirit to stake claim on the aspirations of our entire life. Paul weighs the effects of giving loyalty to the world and finds only bondage. Surrender to the Spirit, on the other hand, brings

liberation. Christians can transcend the material world because of their union with Christ in the Spirit, and they should choose the holier path.

GOSPEL: JOHN 14:15-16, 23-26

The evangelist answers the question “does Christ remain with us?” with a resounding “Yes”. Salvation is revealed as the indwelling of the true God, and this God is trinitarian. The One who creates us sends the One who saves us, who in turn makes known the One who continues to teach us. God the Father, Son, and Spirit are now clearly understood and active throughout history. Faith in the abiding God, through Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit grafts believers to an unshakeable branch that gives life and strength to meet whatever lies ahead.



When Christians contemplate themselves as part of God's Church, the images that come readily to mind are Vatican basilicas, grand gothic buildings, or an organisational structure spanning the globe. We mustn't forget that prior to baroque structures and stained glass – God's Holy Church is first and foremost the people moved by the Holy Spirit. The invisible aspect of the Church precedes and establishes the visible. At the Second Vatican Council, our teachers, the bishops, affirmed that the identity of the Church is primarily rooted in God our Father's mysterious presence in our world. We are here as Church only because the Ever-Living God first called us in Jesus Christ and assembled us into a people of faith (*Lumen Gentium, the Constitution on the Church, Chapters 1 & 2*).

The tale of the Tower of Babel (Gen 11:1-9) illustrated how collective human pride of our esteemed worldly achievements above God our Father brought about disastrous consequences that scattered the people into factions ever at odds with one another. This week, we commemorate the 'antithesis of Babel' at Pentecost. By the humility of Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit, God overcame the pride of people by effecting a reversal of Babel, healing our estrangement from one another to create a renewed human community in faith – the Church. St. Paul likened this community to a body, with Jesus Christ at the head and the baptised as its members.

Despite the power of the Spirit to unite the body, the sin of pride still looms at large. Earnest Christians who live their

religious faith intensely may still be misled into ways that break unity instead of fostering it. This fallen tendency to divide has been present in the Church since the beginning. St. Paul denounced the factionalism that sprang up and threatened to split the early Christians (1 Cor 1:12-13). History records the great rift that opened when Eastern and Western Christianity separated. Churches can forget their bonds of shared faith and sever relations with one another, forgoing God's call to love and unity. Our own parishes today are no strangers to petty quarrels or ego-battles. We witness fellow believers falling out with one another over ideological differences online, willing to risk mutual alienation just to prove that their "brand" of Christianity is better.

It can be very discouraging to see these realities in our Church today. However, the presence of the Holy Spirit reminds us that the Church is irrevocably tied to the perfection of God. God our Father will never abandon the Church no matter how pervasive sin becomes. For every tower of Babel we erect, the Holy Spirit promises that the power of Pentecost will purify and bind the Church together. Relying on the Holy Spirit doesn't mean we throw our hands up and do nothing about division and disharmony within the Church – we can't say "only God can solve these problems" and settle into the role of bystanders. We must continue to engage God's grace and work towards better communion.

REFLECTIONS

Personal Reflection & Sharing Questions

Take time to reflect on the following, then share if you are in a group.

What struck you from the Scripture passages? What stirs your heart? Remain with it for a while.

Think of fellow Catholics who speak a different religious “language” (preference, style, habit, or spirituality) from you and describe them.

How does the Holy Spirit invite you to forge better communion with these “foreign” Catholics?

Supplementary Questions

You may wish to reflect on one of the following questions according to your context.

For Small Christian Communities

What is the Word that has given life to this community during this season of Easter? Are we ready to live in unity through the power of the Holy Spirit?

For Ministries

Is the ministry a Spirit-led ministry?

Are we using the gifts and charisms given by the Holy Spirit?

For Families

Is the Holy Spirit central in the life of our family?

How often do we as a family seek to be guided by the Holy Spirit?

Take Home

Communion in the Holy Spirit brings oneness and life.

Doing Your Bit

Pray for the person(s) that was invited to be moved by the Holy Spirit and invite them to join the community of your parish.

CLOSING PRAYER

God our Father, You have given us a wonderful community in the Church and guaranteed its unity with the enduring presence of the Holy Spirit. Help us to never forget Your call to remain one in the mysterious body of Your Son our Lord Jesus Christ. Let the Spirit enkindle our communion, so that our care and charity towards one another makes Your Gospel of love penetrate the hearts of all, in the same way Your Spirit enabled Your Word through the apostles to be understood by everyone at that Pentecost. Amen. Alleluia.



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WHAT COULD WE HAVE DONE BETTER?

Thanks for using this booklet! We hope that the reflections have helped you and your community to grow in faith. Did this booklet meet your expectations? What else would you like to see in future booklets? Your feedback is important to us. Let us know!



[ONE.ORG.SG/FEEDBACK](https://one.org.sg/feedback)

APPENDIX – EASTER ACTIVITIES

CELEBRATING SUNDAYS OF EASTER

Easter Sunday (17 April 2022)

Together with family and friends, let us be ready and watchful as we celebrate the Easter Vigil as one Body in Christ.

2nd Sunday of Easter - Divine Mercy Sunday (24 April 2022)

Gather your family, ministry or community members and pray the Divine Mercy chaplet. We lift up in this prayer those who are most in need of His mercy.

3rd Sunday of Easter – Labour Day (1 May 2022)

On this day, we implore the intercession of St. Joseph the Worker. Let us honour the men in our lives and also pray that he may become our role model in our family life and work.

4th Sunday of Easter - Mother's Day (8 May 2022)

Offer a spiritual bouquet to our Blessed Virgin Mary by praying a rosary. We pray especially for mothers and those who are trying to conceive.

5th Sunday of Easter – Vesak Day (15 May 2022)

Read the Vesak Message by the Vatican or the Archbishop of Singapore. At this time, we join the Church in our prayers for universal solidarity and mutual respect.

6th Sunday of Easter (22 May 2022)

Begin a nine day (from 27 May to 4 June 2022) novena prayer to the Holy Spirit on the day after Ascension Thursday.

7th Sunday of Easter - World Communication Day (29 May 2022)

Read the Holy Father Francis' message for the 56th World Communications Day. In learning to be a synodal Church, we ask God the Father to grant us graces to truly listen with a free and open heart, without prejudice.

Pentecost Sunday (5 June 2022)

Prepare a music playlist for Pentecost and play it at the background as you go about your week. Alternatively, you can listen to CatholicSG Radio. Sing along whenever the Holy Spirit moves you.

APPENDIX – EASTER ACTIVITIES

FAMILY EASTER ACTIVITY: FAITH SEEDLINGS

Use this family Easter activity to sprout a seed this spring as the perfect reminder of the new life we have in Jesus as His children.

You will need:

- seeds,
 - paper towels,
 - plastic bag,
 - water and
 - a Bible.
1. Have each of your family member place four seeds in a folded piece of paper towel.
 2. Place the paper towel and seeds inside a plastic bag. Leave the plastic bag open.
 3. Moisten (but do not over-water) the towels and place the seed baggies in a sunny area.
 4. Have different family members care for the seedlings each day.
 5. Read aloud 1 Corinthians 3:6-9 and discuss how your family's seedlings are like or unlike each family member's faith growth and development.

APPENDIX – EASTER ACTIVITIES

CELEBRATING PENTECOST – TONGUES OF FIRE – MOBILE SHEET

Adapted from William H. Sadlier, Inc.

Bring the Good News of Jesus out into the world by making a mobile to show what you will do!

Materials:

1. Clothes hanger or a stick
2. Thread
3. Red coloured construction paper
4. Marker or pens

Methods:

1. Print the flames on the construction paper.
2. Cut out the flames and decorate the flame with words or symbols that describe how you will use a gift of the Holy Spirit to spread the Good News of Jesus to others.
3. Punch a hole in the top of the flame and run a thread through it.
4. Knot the thread and hang the flame on a clothes hanger or stick.



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