

2023 EASTER REFLECTION BOOKLET | YEAR A

# The Word

## The Life of the World

*Your word is a lamp to my feet  
and a light to my path.*

*Psalm 119:105*



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# Easter Message

Dear Sisters and Brothers

Alleluia, the Lord has truly risen, Alleluia.

Words, words, words. We cannot live without them. However, as we move on with life at an increasingly faster pace, we try to minimise the words we use. I am sure we all know the meaning of "SMS." The shorter the message, the better—or at least, or that's what we all initially believed. As we abbreviated to make the messages shorter, it led to a loss of the real meaning of the words that were used. Soon, we will use words without understanding their real meaning and the words will be used out of context.

The Word of God is life-producing. Life is renewed through the Word. Life is created through the Word. The Word of God is alive and active. As we celebrate Easter, we celebrate our Father being faithful to His Word. The Word, Jesus, came into our midst, lived our lives and brought us salvation. We come together to share this Word and live in His presence as we do so. Let the Word of God astound you as you share it with one another and be filled with Easter gladness.

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 centre.
- To increase communication between family members. Love should be the main message in all communication, so 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



# Facilitating Group Reflection

**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.

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**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.

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**... 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 lengthy and verbose sharing that consume other people's opportunities to offer their sharing.

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**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.

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**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.

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**...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 2023 Easter Reflection Booklet.

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

**Broadcast times will be on  
every Thursday at 8am  
starting from 6 April 2023.**

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 A)

## *The Word – The Life of the World*

Week	Readings	Theme
Easter Sunday	Acts of the Apostles 10:34, 37-43 Col 3:1-4 John 20:1-9	The Word is Alive
2 <sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Easter	Acts of the Apostles 2:42-47 1 Peter 1:3-9 John 20:19-31	The Word Binds Us Together
3 <sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Easter	Acts of the Apostles 2:14,22-33 1 Peter 1:17-21 Luke 24:13-35	New Life Through The Word
4 <sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter	Acts of the Apostles 2:14, 36-41 1 Peter 2:20-25 John 10:1-10	Listen to the Word
5 <sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter	Acts of the Apostles 6:1-7 1 Peter 2:4-9 John 14:1-12	The Word Leads Us to Life
6 <sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter	Acts of the Apostles 8:5-8, 14-17 1 Peter 3:15-18 John 14:15-21	The Word is Love
7 <sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter	Acts of the Apostles 1:12-14 1 Peter 4:13-16 John 17:1-11	The Glorified Word Among Us
Pentecost Sunday	Acts of the Apostles 2:1-11 1 Cor 12:3-7,12-13 John 20:19-23	Promise Fulfilled in the Word



# Easter Sunday

## The Word is Alive

### **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.

Heavenly Father, we thank You for Your immense love by sending your Son, Jesus to die for us. We thank You for raising Jesus from the dead at the first Easter two thousand years ago. By His resurrection, You have opened the gates of Heaven for us. You have made it possible for us to spend eternity with You. You reveal the message that You have for us today as we reflect on Your Word. Let Your Word dwell in our hearts, and let our lives be transformed by Your love through our risen Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.



# Readings:

The three readings and their accompanying commentaries must be read out loud, allowing some time for a silent reflection.

Then the readings are explained by the leader or group facilitator using the given commentaries. Preparation is recommended for the leader or group facilitator to read and understand prior to the meeting.

## 1st Reading: Acts of Apostles 10:34, 37-43

The reading shows our heavenly Father's desire to include everyone, not only the Israelites and the Jews, into His family. We read that St. Peter was sent by God to share about the resurrected Christ with Cornelius, an Italian and Gentile (non-Jew). The Covenants of old were reserved for the Israelites only; but the New Covenant, instituted by Christ, is for everyone. What is notable is that even though the angel of God visited Cornelius, he did not share the Gospel with him. Instead, God tasks St. Peter, a human like you and I, to share the Good News.

## 2nd Reading: Colossians 3:1-4

When Jesus was raised from the dead, His body was no longer the same. Instead, it was glorified. Through our baptism, we imitate Christ's death and resurrection. Similarly, our new life in Christ is meant to be different from our previous life. St. Paul writes that our life is **hidden with Christ in God**. Through faith, our thoughts are meant to dwell on heavenly things, and to be a disciple of Christ is to bring these divine qualities into our daily lives.

## Gospel: John 20:1-9

This is the essence of the Gospel. This is the pivotal moment in human history. The fact of the resurrection reveals to us that Jesus is the Messiah. The resurrection emboldened His disciples to share the Good News. The resurrection brought a meaning and a purpose to our lives. Now, it is our responsibility to share the Gospel, the Good News of the salvation brought by Jesus to others and to tell them the story of Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah.



# Reflections

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

At some point in our lives, regardless of whether we are a cradle Catholic or an adult convert, someone reached out to us to share the Gospel. This person piqued our interest about Jesus and made us want to find out more about Him.

What followed next can only be described as falling in love. We came to understand the immensity of Christ's love for us through His sacrifice on the Cross. Jesus Himself tells us that there is no greater love than **to lay down one's life for one's friends** (John 15:13). True love seeks to be shared. Jesus draws us into His love through the sacraments, and our lives are transformed by these sacraments.

Through our baptism, we become the sons and daughters of God the Most High and are filled with the Holy Spirit. We have been offered freedom from the chains of sin and given the grace of eternal life with God in Heaven. Therefore, St. Paul urges us to **set [our] minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth** (Col 3:2). We are called to be holy and set apart from the world. Our thoughts, words, and actions must reflect this.

As we are in the world, we should be concerned with earthly things and how to transform them so that our Father may be glorified through them. Following in Christ's footsteps, we are called to be in the world so that others may come to know God the Father through us. Just like how our Father called us to cooperate with Him to share the Gospel with others. His last commandment on earth to His Apostles, and by extension, to us, is to be His **witnesses ... to the ends of the earth** (Acts 1:8). This Easter, let us heed this commandment. Let us ask God to use us as His instruments to evangelise the world!

# Sharing Questions:

This section is divided into Personal and Group Contextual sharing. The latter is meant to prompt sharing based on the specific context i.e. Small Christian Communities, Ministry or Family. Allow time to reflect on these questions and time for everyone to respond.

## 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.

- Have you ever put aside time to seriously reflect on the fact of the resurrection and how you have lived your life because of this belief?
- Have you ever shared about the Good News of the resurrection with unbelievers?

## Group Contextual Sharing Questions

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

### For Small Christian Communities

We talk about what struck us in the passages of scripture and how we can share the Word of God as a community.

- How have you shared the resurrection of the Lord with the community?
- The Apostles were sent out to share the Gospel to the world. How can we as a community bring Christ to others?

### For Ministry

We talk about what struck us in the passages of scripture and how we can share the Word of God as a ministry.

- In what ways has your ministry shared about the resurrection of the Lord? Has it been restricted to the Eastertide only?
- As we carry out our responsibilities as a ministry, how can we show that the resurrection of the Lord is present in us?



## **For Family**

*We talk about what struck us in the passages of scripture and how we can share the Word of God as a family.*

- Is your family an Easter Family?
- Does your family live with a lively hope and love of the risen Lord all year round?

## **Take home**

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

I have been blessed to hear the Gospel, now it is my turn to bless others.

## **Doing your bit**

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

During this season of Easter, pray to God to send someone your way who needs to hear the Gospel. Pray also for the courage and grace to share the Good News with him/her! Then read the gospels and write down three verses that had struck you.

# 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.*

Father, we thank You for the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the gift of Your Gospel. You have transformed us with Your love and grace; let us remain in Your presence always. Thank you for sending those to share the gospel with us, as well as for this gift of faith, which puts fear in perspective and empowers us to keep walking closer to You. May we, through Christ our Lord, be Your instruments of Easter peace and joy to all we meet on our pilgrim way now and always. Amen.

# My Easter Reflection Journal

During this season of Easter, pray to God to send someone your way who needs to hear the Gospel. Pray also for the courage and grace to share the Good News with him/her! Then read the gospels and write down three verses that had struck you.

# 2nd Sunday of Easter

## The Word Binds Us Together

### **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.

Heavenly Father, we praise and thank You for Your unconditional love and abiding presence in our lives. Your life-giving Word enlightens us on our pilgrim way as we try navigating through the distractions of life. Only Your Word can unite us as one people of God and as one people we want to glorify You and testify to Your love. We make this prayer through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, God forever and ever, Amen.



# Readings:

The three readings and their accompanying commentaries must be read out loud, allowing some time for a silent reflection.

Then the readings are explained by the leader or group facilitator using the given commentaries. Preparation is recommended for the leader or group facilitator to read and understand prior to the meeting.

## 1st Reading: Acts of the Apostles 2:42-47

Luke speaks of the inspiring beginnings of the renewed people of God at Pentecost. He highlights the four key elements of model community living by the first Christian community: teaching by the apostles, mutual sharing of lives, the Eucharist and praying together. The apostles' teaching contained Jesus' words and deeds which guided their way of living. This openness to the Holy Spirit and faithfulness to Christ transformed and led them to have "all things in common". It is not that members did not possess private property, rather, more financially abled ones disposed part of their property and shared the proceeds with those in need.

## 2nd Reading: 1 Peter 1:3-9

This is a very pastoral letter. It strives to encourage converts as they are confronted with real problems in their daily lives which test their newfound faith. The author shows Jesus as the reason and anchor of daily living, with God our Father intimately involved. Our Father saves us as we progressively emulate Christ, even in suffering.

The letter's main themes are summarised as: (1) God our Father gave us a **new birth**, (2) which led to a **hope**, (3) founded on Jesus' **resurrection**, and (4) Christians have an everlasting heavenly **inheritance**. The letter makes sense of suffering and arouses sentiments of perseverance and hope (vv 6-9).

## Gospel: John 20:19-31

The disciples are filled with joy when Jesus makes His crucified and risen body visible. They experience His risen physical reality (v 20) and receive greetings of "peace". They (as we) are commissioned by Him, just as the Father had sent Him, to continue His critical presence in the world. Through the resurrection, Jesus lays the foundation for the Sacrament of Reconciliation (vv 22-23). Doubting Thomas made a striking journey from a lack of faith to believing only when he experienced the physical reality of Jesus' body. Like the beloved disciple, we are called to believe without seeing Jesus (vv 8-9).





# Reflections

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

The witness of the first Christian community offers us a clear pathway of living a joyful, faith-filled, and others-centred Easter life. How aligned is your life with the four key elements stated? Singapore prides itself on being efficient, progressive, meritocratic, and prosperous. We are oftentimes the envy of many in Asia, who are in abject poverty and unable to substantially improve the quality of their lives, even with great effort. However, our overly hectic and demanding schedules to enhance our material lives come at a price, leaving many feeling divided within.

Like a frantic rabbit, we hop from place to place easily forgetting the meaning of “being” rather than “doing”. Having a pragmatic outlook, we end up failing to recognise the presence of those who do not “add value” to our lives, rendering them invisible and unimportant. More than just making financial donations, are we sharing our time with those in need, listening, journeying, and praying for them? Do we have a sense of solidarity with the vulnerable and despised? This spiritual sensitivity and deep connectivity towards others come about only if we are intimately connected with the Word of God.

God’s Word awakens our hearts to the suffering Christ in others and binds us to those we conveniently ignore or are unaware of. It also gives us courage to offer encouragement and hope to those sidelined by society. Jesus draws close to us through His Word and grants us peace no matter the external disturbances. The aspiration towards our heavenly goal inspires us never to give up on others but to continue believing and sowing seeds of love and unity. Although we do not see Christ physically, by leaning on the Word of God, we experience life, live in supernatural light, and perceive how inextricably our lives are bound to each other in Christ.



# Sharing Questions:

This section is divided into Personal and Group Contextual sharing. The latter is meant to prompt sharing based on the specific context i.e. Small Christian Communities, Ministry or Family. Allow time to reflect on these questions and time for everyone to respond.

## 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.

- When you are confronted with difficulties, does the Word of God anchor you to be on the right path?
- Do disappointments and trials push you to cut off your relationship with others? Does the Word of God give you an example to follow in such times?

## Group Contextual Sharing Questions

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

### For Small Christian Communities

We talk about what struck us in the passages of scripture and how we can share the Word of God as a community.

- How rooted is the community on the Word of God? Does the Word of God convict you be a community of hope?
- Have the sharings of the members of the community shown you the relevance of the Word of God?

### For Ministry

We talk about what struck us in the passages of scripture and how we can share the Word of God as a ministry.

- How does the ministry bring to mind the Word of God at your meetings?
- Does the work and demands of the ministry sideline the use of the Word of God in your meetings?

## **For Family**

*We talk about what struck us in the passages of scripture and how we can share the Word of God as a family.*

- Does the family read the Word of God and share what has struck each one?
- Does the Word of God provide hope and joy to the family?

## **Take home**

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

Only when the Word of God is close to our minds and hearts that are we able to make sense of the challenges in our own lives and those of others. We have an inseparable connection with Jesus and with each other.

## **Doing your bit**

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

Write down what you would like to share with this person that you had been praying for so that you are clear about what you want to share. Pray using the three verses that had struck you.

# *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.*

Loving Father, we thank You for this precious time of prayer and sharing. In the busyness of our lives and lack of spiritual focus, we fail to recognise Your presence, sink into negativity, and become disconnected from others around us. Your Word, Father, awakens our hearts to the suffering Christ in others and binds us as a people who experience similar events in life. Your life-giving Word, Jesus, whom You raised from the dead becomes our anchor to stay together despite the trials of life, and gives us courage to offer encouragement and hope to those sidelined by society. We thank You for Your Word that gives us life. We make this prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.



# My Easter Reflection Journal

Write down what you would like to share with this person that you had been praying for so that you are clear about what you want to share. Pray using the three verses that had struck you.



3rd Sunday of Easter

# New Life Through The Word

## **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.

God our Father, source of all goodness, we thank You for the gift of our lives. There is no new life without You and there will be no new life without Your Word being active and alive in our lives. We thank You for leading and guiding us in the right path and closer to You. We come together to contemplate on the mystery of Your Son's resurrection, so that we may better dwell in You and to be more and more like Jesus, our Saviour and Lord. Amen.



# Readings:

The three readings and their accompanying commentaries must be read out loud, allowing some time for a silent reflection.

Then the readings are explained by the leader or group facilitator using the given commentaries. Preparation is recommended for the leader or group facilitator to read and understand prior to the meeting.

## **1st Reading: Acts of the Apostles 2:14, 22-33**

We hear from a radically transformed Peter declaring the resurrection of Jesus and its messianic significance. By referring to Jesus as a man three times in the reading, he was impressing upon the audience that the miracle of a dead person being brought back to life did indeed take place, made possible by God our Father in fulfilment of His promise in the Old Testament. The apostles themselves were eyewitnesses to the risen Christ, with further proof evident from the descent of the Holy Spirit on the community of believers.

## **2nd Reading: 1 Peter 1:17-21**

In his letter, Peter expounds on his preachings recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. Writing to believers residing among Gentiles across different regions, he was emphasising the importance of how they chose to act and behave, especially while in a foreign land. Previously, the communities were living in unenlightened ways shaped by past generations. But having been made aware of Jesus' identity, it was time for them to change and take up the new life offered by Him, obtained through God the Father raising Him from the dead.

## **Gospel: Luke 24:13-35**

In this setting, Jesus made contact but disguised as a stranger, and the two apostles gave Him a brief summary of His life. Despite their disbelief which probably prompted them to leave Jerusalem and their companions behind, Jesus exercised patience in using Scripture to enlighten them. By then, their desolation had lifted enough for them to see the need of the other and extend hospitality. Because of their response, they were able to partake in a Eucharistic meal during which they finally recognised the risen Lord. Immediately, they chose to return to the community to share their experience.

# Reflections

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

We all experience changes in our lives. Some, such as ageing, are beyond our control. There are others which are initiated by us because we are dissatisfied with the current state of affairs, like modifying our diet or limiting time on social media. One thing is certain - change is difficult, as those who regularly make and fail to keep New Year's resolutions can attest to. Regardless of whether it had been a conscious intent on Peter's part, it is clear that he was a completely different person after his encounters with the resurrected Jesus. From a bumbling apostle, he became a leader able to preach and heal like his master even though the latter was no longer physically present. By receiving the Holy Spirit and availing himself with scripture and the community of believers, Peter underwent a transformation which would not have been possible through sheer willpower.

Similarly, we have been gifted with these same tools even if we lack his first-hand witnessing. Just like the apostles headed to Emmaus, we allow negative emotions to overtake us. The paschal mystery of Jesus comprises His passion, death, resurrection and ascension. However, the first two events have tended to receive a disproportionately greater amount of attention. Good Friday service attracts the largest attendance at church, while the crucifix features prominently in our religion. To have a balanced perspective and understanding, it would help to spend more time contemplating on and talking about the resurrection narratives, which form the basis for our faith.

Following the examples of Peter and the other apostles throughout the New Testament, we can be confident in drawing strength from the risen Lord to be moulded into life-giving disciples while experiencing joy amidst resistance and challenges.





# Sharing Questions:

This section is divided into Personal and Group Contextual sharing. The latter is meant to prompt sharing based on the specific context i.e. Small Christian Communities, Ministry or Family. Allow time to reflect on these questions and time for everyone to respond.

## 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.

- Peter went through a radical change because he believed. What radical change have you made in your life because of the Word of God?
- If the Word of God does not give you new life, where do you look to find new life?

## Group Contextual Sharing Questions

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

### For Small Christian Communities

We talk about what struck us in the passages of scripture and how we can share the Word of God as a community.

- Is your community able to listen to the despair and pain of others without jumping into giving solutions?
- What are the words of life that you offer to those in the community? Are these words the Word of God?

### For Ministry

We talk about what struck us in the passages of scripture and how we can share the Word of God as a ministry.

- During the Easter season, has the ministry moved from death to the old ways to newness of life that the resurrected Lord is offering?
- Has the celebration of Easter set you free from the hurts and biasness that ministry members have inflicted on you?



## **For Family**

**We talk about what struck us in the passages of scripture and how we can share the Word of God as a family.**

- In what ways is your family new because of the celebration of Easter?
- Are you allowing the risen Christ to show you more desirable ways of family life that would strengthen relationships with one another?

## **Take home**

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

New life is always possible with Jesus in our hearts.

## **Doing your bit**

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

Share what you have written to the person you have been praying for and ask for their response to what you have written. If you are part of a ministry or a community or you have a family, share what you have written and what the response of the person you have been praying for with your ministry or community or family. Pray again the three verses that had struck you.

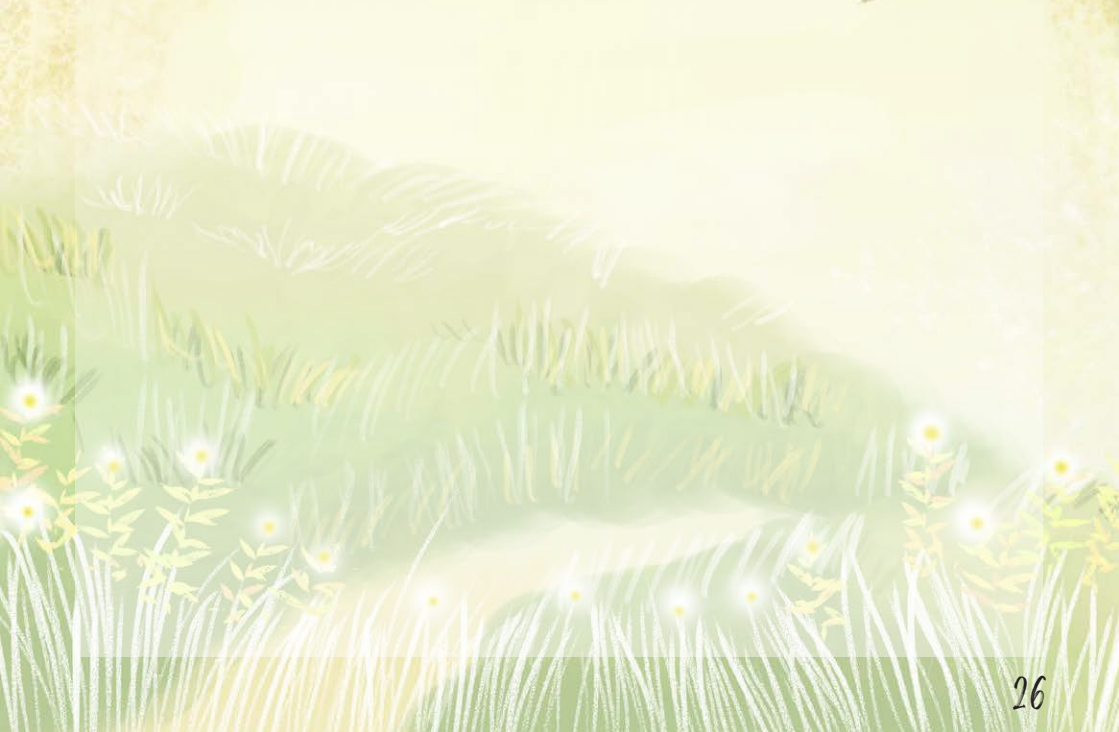
# *Closing Prayer*

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

God our Father, Your love and generosity towards us never ceases, even when we fail to trust You or choose to stray from Your ways. We all experience changes in our lives and in several of them we resist the changes. Peter changed completely when he encountered the risen Lord. You call us to have a balanced perspective of life and understand that to be moulded into a life-giving disciple, we need to change while experiencing challenges and resistances from both inside and outside of ourselves. Your Word has always guided Your chosen people. We are grateful that You continue to open Your Word to us as we make this journey of faith during this Easter season. We make this prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.

# My Easter Reflection Journal

Share what you have written to the person you have been praying for and ask for their response to what you have written. If you are part of a ministry or a community or you have a family, share what you have written and what the response of the person you have been praying for with your ministry or community or family. Pray again the three verses that had struck you.



# 4th Sunday of Easter

## Listen to the Word

### **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.*

God our Father, You gave us our Good Shepherd, and through the ages Your voice was heard by many as You called them and guided them. Despite the many distractions, Your voice rang clearly for them. Your call was to be who we are in Your presence, a child in this great world, You created through Your Word. For only through Your Word can we find true wisdom, peace and direction in a world torn by strife due to individualistic pursuit of vain glory. At this time of celebrating the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, we celebrate the conquest of good over evil, the liberation from self-destruction and the Light of Truth being a beacon for all who search for the Truth. We praise and glorify You, through Christ our Lord. Amen.



# Readings:

The three readings and their accompanying commentaries must be read out loud, allowing some time for a silent reflection.

Then the readings are explained by the leader or group facilitator using the given commentaries. Preparation is recommended for the leader or group facilitator to read and understand prior to the meeting.

## 1st Reading: Acts of the Apostles 2:14, 36-41

We know that listening is not mere hearing, that the sounds that go through our ears need to find a home in our minds and hearts for things to truly take root. The crowd heard Peter's preaching and was 'cut to the heart', showing how they listened and allowed his words to truly touch their hearts. When we open our hearts to listen to the Word as they did, we too can be converted as the crowd was. A heart that listens to the Lord will lead us to respond to Him.

## 2nd Reading: 1 Peter 2:20-25

Peter's letter reveals a stark contrast: between the Lord who was obedient to His Father enduring suffering for our sake, and us who are like sheep who have gone astray. The difference is obedience, and the Lord is the example of what it means to truly obey. The word 'obedience' is derived from the Latin word for 'listen' and so the invitation to obey God our Father is also an invitation to listen to His Word. Our journey towards obedience to God thus begins with us learning to listen in order for us to obey.

## Gospel: John 10:1-10

The relationship between the shepherd and the sheep is very much auditory: the sheep know and listen to the shepherd's voice. The Gospel reading reminds us that this relationship is not something that happens overnight. The sheep first hear the voice of the shepherd before slowly recognising it as the one who cares for them. It's only after they recognise the voice that they follow the shepherd and not a stranger. Our relationship with our Father is like that: we hear our Father's voice and begin to follow God as we recognise this voice deep in our hearts.





# Reflections

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

Sheep have a reputation for not being very clever and for being easily led astray. Whether this is true or not isn't something that city dwellers can confirm but what does seem to be true is that after a time, the sheep grow to know their shepherd and would willingly follow this person anywhere. If we look beyond the image of just sheep and shepherd, and focus on the relationship that grows between them, we realise the depth of this parable and it reminds us of how our relationship with the Lord should be like.

Our lives of faith are based very much on the relationship that we build with the Lord, a relationship that needs to be nurtured through our listening to Him with our entire hearts so that we can grow to know and love Him better. This relationship is not something that we keep for ourselves. We celebrate Vocation Sunday this week and it's good to remember that we're all called (the word "vocation" derives from the Latin vocare "to call") by the Lord to live our lives for Him and for others in unique ways.

Healthy relationships require good communication. We foster good communication by being open to the voice of the Lord and by allowing this voice to touch our hearts. This is where we begin to harness the ability to follow the Lord in His call for us to go out to serve Him in the world. This is what 'mission' is all about — having a strong relationship with the Lord. A relationship that is based on us listening to Him from our hearts and to respond to Him through how we live our lives, lovingly and faithfully.



# Sharing Questions:

This section is divided into Personal and Group Contextual sharing. The latter is meant to prompt sharing based on the specific context i.e. Small Christian Communities, Ministry or Family. Allow time to reflect on these questions and time for everyone to respond.

## 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.

- Try to remember a time when a passage of scripture, a prayer or a moment during the Eucharist that you heard God our Father speaking to you. How did you feel then and how were you prompted to respond to God?
- The aim of good listening is a good relationship with God. How would you describe your relationship with God now and what might God be inviting you to do to build this relationship?

## Group Contextual Sharing Questions

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

### For Small Christian Communities

We talk about what struck us in the passages of scripture and how we can share the Word of God as a community.

- Is your community able to listen to the despair and pain of others without jumping into giving solutions?
- What are the words of life that you offer to those in the community? Are these words the Word of God?

### For Ministry

We talk about what struck us in the passages of scripture and how we can share the Word of God as a ministry.

- How has the Easter celebration helped us learn to listen to the voice of our heavenly Father?
- How has the ministry been instrumental for us to harness the ability to follow the Lord in His call for us to go out to serve Him in the Church and in the world?



## For Family

*We talk about what struck us in the passages of scripture and how we can share the Word of God as a family.*

- Has the Easter celebration helped us as a family to listen to one another? What can we, as a family, do to better listen to each other as we grow to listen more to the Lord?
- What spiritual practices (praying, reading scripture etc.) can we adopt as a family so that we can grow in our relationship with the Lord?

## Take home

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

A heart that listens to the Lord will lead us to build a deep relationship with Him. We do this in the reality of our lives, while discerning where the Lord is calling us on mission.

## Doing your bit

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

Rework your sharing if necessary. Read your written sharing (reflections) and see if you need to make any changes. Pray again the three verses that had struck you.

# 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.*

Father, we can never thank You enough for the Good Shepherd, our risen Lord Jesus Christ. Your gentle presence is here with us, listening to and accompanying us as we reflect on Your Word. Our lives of faith are based very much on the relationship we have with You and Your Word. This relationship is nurtured through our listening to Your Word with our entire hearts so that we can live according to it. It is in listening to Your Word that we can hear Your voice directing us to the right path. We make this prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.



# My Easter Reflection Journal

Rework your sharing if necessary. Read your written sharing (reflections) and see if you need to make any changes. Pray again the three verses that had struck you.





# 5th Sunday of Easter

## The Word Leads Us To Life

### **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.*

Almighty and eternal Father, our desire is to open our eyes to Your actions, give ear to Your Word and dispose our hearts to the working of the Holy Spirit so that we may see, hear, love, praise and glorify Your presence in all of our lives. We pray through Your beloved Son, Jesus Christ in unity with the Holy Spirit. Amen.



# Readings:

The three readings and their accompanying commentaries must be read out loud, allowing some time for a silent reflection.

Then the readings are explained by the leader or group facilitator using the given commentaries. Preparation is recommended for the leader or group facilitator to read and understand prior to the meeting.

## 1st Reading: Acts of the Apostles 6:1-7

As the early church grew, it had to adapt to the growing cultural influences and philosophies as gentile converts were initiated into the community. The influx of converts was met with mistrust. Attempts to unify everyone was not without a great deal of tension. Yet, the Christian community grew in numbers with each passing day. The apostles acknowledged the problems, but they were unable to devote the necessary attention to the problem. We see the power of the Holy Spirit at work despite the disunity. A formal structure within the community was being formed with the commissioning of the seven deacons to support and foster deeper unity in the community and in Jesus Christ. The solemn imposition of hands tells us that their service was for a divine service in the life of the church.

## 2nd Reading: 1 Peter 2:4-9

The cornerstone is also known as the foundation stone that determines the position of an entire building. St. Peter makes reference to Psalm 118 in a direct speech against those who reject Jesus as the Messiah for they will stumble and fall. The temple or the people of God built upon Jesus the cornerstone, who gather in and through Jesus, will have access to God our Father. This new community of believers is the dwelling place of God our Father and therefore hold the title “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation”; no longer separated from God our Father and subjected to the oppression of sin. Each of us are called to look at ourselves: at the dignity of our call to service, and the dignity of the community to which we are called to serve and bring others into relationship with God.

## Gospel: John 14:1-12

The Gospel reading takes us to an event before Jesus' Passion. At the beginning of John 14, Jesus tells the disciples and us, **“Do not let your hearts be troubled”** as He prepares the disciples for the time when He is no longer with them—when they will have to live His message without His physical presence. Where Jesus is going, His disciples will be able to follow. Thomas contradicts Jesus by saying that the disciples still don't know where Jesus is going or how to get there. Philip speaks for all of us when he says to Jesus: **“ Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.”** These words sum up the entire purpose and direction of our

life's journey. Only one thing is necessary: knowing and loving Jesus, we will now know, love, and serve God the Father because Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Yet the disciples are not able to make sense of what they were hearing despite having seen Jesus' works and having heard His words. Jesus' response to His disciples is equally critical for us to examine what blocks us from fully obeying God's will and living as Jesus has shown us: **"Have I been with you all this time and you still do not know me?"**

## Reflections

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

Like Thomas and Philip, we want to know the right way and see the 'real thing' before we can trust and believe. How often do we still struggle and falter at our plans to figure out our lives on our own efforts and means? At times, we might try to challenge and cajole God to show us proof of the fullness of life that we are to find in living out our relationship with Him. Do we also spend time decorating this life with our achievements/activities at work, family, church and our community at large? These activities risk becoming the trappings of a 'good' Christian life by our own standards, without Jesus as our cornerstone. They can distract us from thinking less of the real life that is found in relationship with the Father. Jesus' "I am the way" is an emphatic pronouncement that He is the only means through which we can reach the Father. There are no shortcuts nor halfway measures in our efforts to follow Jesus. Jesus is the truth: total revelation of the invisible God. He is everything we need to know about the Father. If we are empty of Jesus, we will not know the truth: who we are and what we are meant for, as individuals and a holy people of God, today and for eternity.

What and where is proof of life in Jesus? The reality of Jesus' "I am the life" was found in the early communities. From the first reading, we hear how Jesus carries on with His work through the people of God. Discord, scandals, persecution are rife but with Jesus as the foundation of their faith and life, the Church becomes a sign of love and service. Our effort as Church is to bring Jesus into the world; not just as a human endeavour but a divine service in answer to the call of being God's people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation. Through Jesus, our Father has given us the Way to live and the Truth of who God is. Real life is truly through Jesus.

# Sharing Questions:

This section is divided into Personal and Group Contextual sharing. The latter is meant to prompt sharing based on the specific context i.e. Small Christian Communities, Ministry or Family. Allow time to reflect on these questions and time for everyone to respond.

## 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.

- What would you say is the cornerstone of your life?
- Has this Easter celebration shown you what the real thing is as Thomas discovered?

## Group Contextual Sharing Questions

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

### For Small Christian Communities

We talk about what struck us in the passages of scripture and how we can share the Word of God as a community.

- What is the truth that you discovered this Easter as a community?
- Has this discovery transformed your relationships with each other and has that helped you to live the new life of Easter?

### For Ministry

We talk about what struck us in the passages of scripture and how we can share the Word of God as a ministry.

- Is there evidence of Jesus as the Way, the Truth, and the Life in your ministry? What would that be?
- How alive has your ministry become because of the celebration of Easter?

### For Family

We talk about what struck us in the passages of scripture and how we can share the Word of God as a family.

- What has been the biggest awareness in the family as we continue to celebrate Easter?
- How does the Word of God lead us to having new ways of relating with one another?



## Take home

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

Only through Jesus, the Word can you find the truth of life and fully live life.

## Doing your bit

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

Share with the person you've been praying for what you've written, and then ask them for their response. After the response has been given, invite that person to your community meeting or ministry meeting or to your family. Do not invite them to the Eucharist (mass) as it is still not the proper time yet. Pray again the three verses that had struck you.

# 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.*

Almighty and ever-loving Father, our effort as Church to bring Jesus into the world is in response to the call to be Your people, a royal priesthood, and a holy nation. Father, You have given us Jesus, the Way to live and the divine Truth. Jesus, who has risen to show the world how mistaken it was about life, is indeed the source of real life. Our Lord Jesus is the only way that leads to eternal happiness, the truth who satisfies the deepest longings of every heart. We are made new through His resurrection and our baptism. We thank You and are always in debt to Your love through Christ our Lord. Amen



# My Easter Reflection Journal

Share with the person you've been praying for what you've written, and then ask them for their response. After the response has been given, invite that person to your community meeting or ministry meeting or to your family. Do not invite them to the Eucharist (mass) as it is still not the proper time yet. Pray again the three verses that had struck you.



# 6th Sunday of Easter

## The Word is Love

### 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.

Heavenly Father,

The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of the Living God, was vital for the survival of the infant Church, enabling the first believers to walk in faith and persist in their faith despite being misunderstood and rejected.

Through the ages, You, O Holy Spirit, came upon the men and women who needed Your guidance and needed to know the scriptures that were relevant for their mission and their lives in a community. We open our gathering here to You through Christ our Lord. Amen.



# Readings:

The three readings and their accompanying commentaries must be read out loud, allowing some time for a silent reflection.

Then the readings are explained by the leader or group facilitator using the given commentaries. Preparation is recommended for the leader or group facilitator to read and understand prior to the meeting.

## 1st Reading: Acts 8:5-8, 14-17

This reading from the Acts of the Apostles is relating to the second stage of the church's expansion as found in chapter 1 verse 8 "**you will be my witnesses, not only in Jerusalem but throughout Judaea and Samaria, and indeed to earth's remotest end.**" This work of evangelisation, the announcing of the Good News began spreading in Judaea, with Stephen courageously witnessing to the Gospel in the earlier part of this book. At this juncture, the writer wanted to place the limelight on the mission work beyond Judaea done by Philip, one of the seven deacons in the early church. It is a significant expansion of the mission into Samaria, a territory considered 'heretical' by the Jews. It then caught the attention of the apostles. Peter and John came to lay hands on the Samaritan converts, who in turn received the Holy Spirit, affirming this mission and validating the conversions to a life following Jesus Christ.

## 2nd Reading: 1 Peter 3:15-18

The gentiles living together with the Christians could not understand their way of life and worldview. Hence, they ridiculed and ostracised the Christians. For this, the text in the First Letter of Peter encourages the Christians then and us now, to always be ready to give an account for our faith. While suffering for the faith, Christians can look to Jesus Christ who suffered excruciating death and was raised by our Father so that all who believe can draw close to God our Father. By the act of Jesus Christ, Christians can defend, and bear witness to the faith to those around, however, they need to do so with courage, gentleness and love. We too, are encouraged to not be afraid of suffering because of Jesus' redemptive act. We must also be witnesses to the faith with gentleness and love.

## Gospel: John 14:15-21

In today's reading, Jesus is telling His disciples and us that to follow Him, there is only one way—to love. Loving God our Father and Jesus cannot be just lip service. Genuine love is expressed not only in words, but in deeds also. When we truly love God, it will be reflected in the ways we act: generous, self-giving, faithful, and obedient to His will. When we can love God in this manner, we are participating in His loving act. Jesus promised us another 'Paraclete', from the Greek word 'Parakletos' meaning advocate or helper. This advocate, the Holy Spirit will continue to inspire and help us to remain in God our Father's love.



# Reflections

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

“Do you love me?” This was Jesus’ question to Peter at the Sea of Tiberias after His resurrection. It is the all-important question that we need to answer as disciples of Jesus. According to the early believers in John’s community, a disciple is not so much about ‘imitating’ Him but to participate in Him, in His life wholly. It means to truly embrace the love of Jesus and become “love” ourselves. It would involve loving God our Father, and Jesus wholeheartedly. It entails changing our outlook on life completely, orienting it to that of God our Father’s: working for the good of others by loving and sharing ourselves. When we choose to love in this manner, Jesus promised that we would not be alone as the Holy Spirit, the great Counsellor, the Advocate, will help us with words, giving us strength and inspiration. Despite our human limitations, we can do great things because the Holy Spirit helps us to reach our fullest potential, of who we are meant to be. This is the foretaste of what eternal life will be like - a life of joy, love and freedom from sins and things that shackle us.

This life of joy and love allows us to look at challenges and sufferings we face with a reason and a purpose to live it differently. The letter of Peter reminds us to be ready to give this reason to anyone who asks, so that they, too, may learn of the salvation that comes from Jesus’ suffering on the cross, redeeming and making all humanity right before God our Father, so that all may enjoy everlasting happiness.

When we decide to pour our lives out to others in love, we go forth and witness ‘not only in Jerusalem, but throughout Judaea and Samaria, and indeed to earth’s remotest end’. (Acts 1:8) This is what the life a disciple of Jesus looks like and we know that the Holy Spirit will be with us in all that we do, wherever we may be. It is the promise of Jesus, and we can indeed rejoice in this with great confidence to be ‘Easter people’ praising and loving God by spreading the message of love to all through words and deeds because the Word is love and the Word gives life.



# Sharing Questions:

This section is divided into Personal and Group Contextual sharing. The latter is meant to prompt sharing based on the specific context i.e. Small Christian Communities, Ministry or Family. Allow time to reflect on these questions and time for everyone to respond.

## 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.

- How have you shown love towards yourself this Easter?
- How have you shown your love for the risen Lord this Easter?

## Group Contextual Sharing Questions

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

### For Small Christian Communities

We talk about what struck us in the passages of scripture and how we can share the Word of God as a community.

- How does the community dwell in love and bring love to others around?
- This Easter life of joy and love allows us to look at challenges and sufferings we face with a reason and a purpose to live it differently. How is this manifested in the community?

### For Ministry

We talk about what struck us in the passages of scripture and how we can share the Word of God as a ministry.

- To truly embrace the love of Jesus and becoming 'love' there is a need to believe and a need to act. How is the ministry aiding you to believe and to act?
- Talk about the impact of generous and loving acts by ministry members and by others. What can we learn from it?



## **For Family**

*We talk about what struck us in the passages of scripture and how we can share the Word of God as a family.*

- How can we participate in Jesus' life wholly in our family?
- Who among our family, friends or neighbours can we witness Jesus' love to? Can we set out a plan to do it?

## **Take home**

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

To love Jesus is to love the Word and to demonstrate it to others.

## **Doing your bit**

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

Give the person the scripture text that you had been praying all these weeks.

# *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.*

Gracious Father, we thank You for this time of listening and reflection. The celebration of Your Son's resurrection gives us a life of joy and love that allows us to look at the challenges and sufferings we face with a reason and a purpose to live it differently. The resurrection of Jesus enables us to decide to pour out our lives in love to others and to go forth, and witness wholeheartedly by doing God's will. The Holy Spirit assists us in reaching our full potential, becoming who we are meant to be, and always choosing what is pleasing to You. We make this prayer through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

# My Easter Reflection Journal

Give the person  
the scripture text  
that you had  
been praying all  
these weeks.





# 7th Sunday of Easter

## The Glorified Word Among Us

### 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.*

God our Father, Your Word was indeed raised and glorified. This gives us reason to ceaselessly celebrate Easter from year to year. This ongoing celebration reminds us that all is indeed possible with You. We gather in these moments to acknowledge all Your mighty works. The resurrected Lord, the Glorified Word is amongst us because of Your immense love for us. Let Your Glorified Word reign over us as we share these moments together for Him who lives and reigns forever and ever. Amen.



# Readings:

The three readings and their accompanying commentaries must be read out loud, allowing some time for a silent reflection.

Then the readings are explained by the leader or group facilitator using the given commentaries. Preparation is recommended for the leader or group facilitator to read and understand prior to the meeting.

## 1st Reading: Acts of the Apostles 1:12-14

In the first reading, we are given a glimpse of life after the Ascension. The disciples must still be reeling with joy that Jesus Christ, their Master, defeated death and was now with God our Father. Yet, there was also something bittersweet about this. After all, Jesus was no longer with them in a physical way. Moreover, they were asked to wait, but they had no idea what was going to happen later on. They could only gather to pray and wait. Christian faith begins at the encounter with Jesus Christ, but it does not stop there. As Christians, we must go out because the Church is missionary in its nature. However, there are times when we are not sure of what God our Father desires from us. At such times, we too should pray and wait.

## 2nd Reading: 1 Peter 4:13-16

In the first letter of Peter, we are told that there is an inextricable link between glory and suffering. Indeed, Easter could not have happened without Good Friday. Christ was glorified precisely because He willingly underwent a horrific death for the sake of love. In the same way, Christians who suffered because of faith and love will enjoy the glory prepared for them. This hope gave strength to so many Christians throughout the centuries to share Christ's sufferings as they built His kingdom on earth. If we are to follow their footsteps in carrying out the Church's mission, we too need the same hope. Of course, this is not easy to believe. St. Peter knew this and that was why he wrote his letter to encourage and exhort his community. We can do the same. As Christians, we need to stay together as a community to exhort one another and to remember together, the hope that was promised to us.

## Gospel: John 17:1-11

The reading is taken from John's farewell discourse, where Jesus said His last words to His disciples. There are two key themes here: glory and knowing. In His prayer, Jesus asked God our Father to be glorified without specifying how. Was He referring to the Cross (see John 3:14, 12:28-33) or the Resurrection? Probably both. Neither is separable from the other. Jesus did not only imply that glory had a cost. Instead, He went further to say that there was something mysteriously glorious about His suffering as the Son of God. The other theme in the reading is knowing God our Father, which Jesus equated with eternal life. Recall that in Genesis, sexual intercourse between Adam and Eve was described with the verb "to know". Thus, there is an inextricable connection between relationship with God our Father and life itself. These two themes are important to John's gospel and have been repeated throughout. For example, Jesus spoke briefly about them to Nicodemus (see John 3:15-16), but He now gave them a fuller treatment in His farewell speech.

## Reflections

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

One way to bring together the three readings for our reflection is to consider an important theological paradox in Christian faith. On the one hand, Christ died and rose in glory. His work was done. On the other hand, the whole thing is not a done deal. A person needs to voluntarily participate in Christ's work of salvation to be a part of it. In that sense, the work of salvation will only be complete in every sense when all of creation participates in it (see Rom 8:19-23).

In the first reading, we read about Jesus ascending to heaven. It felt like a happy ending, yet, the passage ended with the disciples waiting for a promised event. The disciples still had much more to do and learn. In the second reading, St. Peter encouraged his community not to lose heart when they suffered for the sake of Christ because they will share in His glory at the end. This rhetoric would be empty of hope if Jesus' disciples did not already witness the glory that had followed His death. Faith became possible because of Jesus' example. Finally, in the gospel, the paradox reaches a fever pitch in the two themes mentioned. Firstly, the saving death of Jesus on the Cross was itself glorious, but this mystery was not yet comprehended by the witnesses until after the Resurrection. Secondly, eternal life begins with knowing God our Father through Christ, but we do not fully experience every aspect of eternal life before the end comes.

What could these mean for us? Eastertide is a time to celebrate Easter in an extended way because it is such a momentous and joyous event. Yet, it also has a trajectory that ends at Pentecost. It has often been said that Pentecost, for Christians, is the birth event of the Church because that was when Jesus' disciples began proclaiming the Good News. In other words, the Church was born for mission; and its identity, as Pope Francis often emphasises, is mission. The readings tell us of Christ's glory by virtue of His work, but they also tell us that the work of salvation is only complete for all creation when all participate in it. We, as Church, have our work cut out for us but we are not to lose heart despite the daunting challenges because we have an example par excellence in Christ.



# Sharing Questions:

This section is divided into Personal and Group Contextual sharing. The latter is meant to prompt sharing based on the specific context i.e. Small Christian Communities, Ministry or Family. Allow time to reflect on these questions and time for everyone to respond.

## 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.

- Where have I witnessed the Word of God come alive in my life this Easter season?
- What does voluntarily participate in Jesus Christ's work of salvation mean to me?

## Group Contextual Sharing Questions

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

### For Small Christian Communities

We talk about what struck us in the passages of scripture and how we can share the Word of God as a community.

- How has the community participated in the work of salvation in the neighbourhood?
- How can our community actively participate in the mission of the Church?

### For Ministry

We talk about what struck us in the passages of scripture and how we can share the Word of God as a ministry.

- What trials are we experiencing as a ministry in serving the Church and its members?
- How does the mission of our ministry participate in the larger mission of the Church?

## **For Family**

*We talk about what struck us in the passages of scripture and how we can share the Word of God as a family.*

- What are some contemporary challenges we are facing as a Christian family today?
- How can we better witness to the glory of the Word in our family life?

## **Take home**

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

The glory of the Word is Jesus glorified. We glorify the Lord when we live His Word.

## **Doing your bit**

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

Invite the person that you have been reaching out to, and arrange a meeting with a priest whom you are familiar and at ease with.

# *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.*

Lord God, as we approach the end of Eastertide, we are well aware that in order to be a part of Christ's work of salvation, we must voluntarily participate in it. This joy of the resurrection encourages us to keep the faith alive in the face of daunting challenges and sufferings, because we know that those who endure will share in His glory at the end of time. Faith becomes possible because of Jesus' example. Amen.

# My Easter Reflection Journal

Invite the person  
that you have been  
reaching out to, and  
arrange a meeting  
with a priest whom  
you are familiar and  
at ease with.



# Pentecost Sunday

## Promise Fulfilled in The Word

### **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.

Heavenly Father, we thank You for Your amazing love. A love that flowed from the Holy Spirit's most generous gift. How wonderful is Your love in providing us with Your sublime presence. We learn from the scriptures that great and wonderful things happened in the lives of the faithful under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We take this moment to acknowledge that we cannot accomplish anything so great and wonderful without the same inspiration that they received from the Holy Spirit. Your Word and the Holy Spirit are our only sources of illumination as we journey towards You. We make this prayer through Christ, our Lord. Amen.





# Readings:

*The three readings and their accompanying commentaries must be read out loud, allowing some time for a silent reflection.*

*Then the readings are explained by the leader or group facilitator using the given commentaries. Preparation is recommended for the leader or group facilitator to read and understand prior to the meeting.*

## **1st Reading: Acts of the Apostles 2:1-11**

The upper room, a place that is away from the rest of the household and away from the sight of the public is where empowerment will take place. One can only marvel at the thought of how God our Father, in His omnipresence and omniscience, still cares about each one of His children and sends down the Holy Spirit into their hearts. Today for some, this may happen to a lesser degree in life-changing encounters or miracles. For others, it may just be through a simple, everyday encounter with a kind-hearted soul. His promise to us (Acts 2:39) is certain and concrete—that if we keep Him in our hearts, He will speak through each one of His children.

## **2nd Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:3-7,12-13**

This reading reminds us that we are all parts of One Body—the Church—and that each of us has been created uniquely in the image and likeness of God our Father. He has showered us with gifts to help fulfil His mission on earth, and that discerning our mission will be a constant struggle until we encounter the Holy Spirit and have those gifts awakened within us. Once the Spirit has been enflamed within our hearts, we must seek out a community in which to practice those gifts and find ways to collaborate, no matter how difficult it may be, toward a communion of communities. Perhaps this is why God our Father has given each of us unique gifts and talents, so that we can use them for the common good in a community of brothers and sisters.



## Gospel: John 20:19-23

As with the first reading, this passage evokes a powerful image of the disciples huddling in fear, anxiety, and despair. Then, when Jesus appears and breathes on them, it is a transformative encounter; the result of that 'Christ encounter' is a radical change in the disciples. There is a fearlessness that allows them to go out and preach in His name (2 Tim 1:7; Isa 41:13), at the same time forgiving those whose sins they choose to forgive. In essence, Jesus gives them the same power He has over sin, an authority that comes from no one other than God our Father. So, by putting our faith in Jesus alone, we are submitting to the will of our Father, who gives us the same power over sin that He gave to His Son, our Saviour.

## Reflections

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

The readings for today provide us with very powerful messages of hope in God's providence, and how He cares for us deeply enough to send the Holy Spirit into our presence. The coming of the Holy Spirit during Pentecost is the turning point for the Church where the disciples are empowered by the Holy Spirit and begin preaching in a language that everyone seems to understand (Acts 2:4-7). Not only that, but the Spirit also brings with it a whole host of gifts for the disciples and for each one of us now, who are baptised—gifts which are meant for the work of God (1 Cor 12:4-7). This is regardless of our nationality, our state of being, our present circumstances; God gives to each one of us a gift which is meant for us to exercise in service to His name. How generous is God our Father, showering us with gifts which we do not ask for, to demonstrate His love for us and to assure us that He is with us always.



Acknowledging and using the gifts we receive is one way to express our gratitude to our loving Father—not that He asks for it. By using our gifts for the benefit of our community, we may be able to meet other brothers and sisters on our faith journey who have been similarly touched. As a result, one will begin to recognise the power of the Holy Spirit in the community and how being a part of a praying community is one of the fruits of being open to our Father’s graces.

If we were to put ourselves in the shoes of the disciples, huddled fearfully in the upper room, perhaps we could draw a parallel to some of the current situations we face in life today—the fear of losing a job, the anxiety of having to sit for exams, perhaps even a fear of catching a deadly disease. There are many who live in fear and anxiety, worry and despair. When Jesus appeared to the disciples, He came to cast out all fear and anxiety (1 John 4:18), and as St. Paul states in 2 Tim 1:7, “for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline.” Thus, we can be assured that on this feast day, we are blessed with a power that transforms us and those around us. If all of us believe today, that the Spirit comes down upon each one of us, then all it takes is for us to open our hearts in humility.



# Sharing Questions:

This section is divided into Personal and Group Contextual sharing. The latter is meant to prompt sharing based on the specific context i.e. Small Christian Communities, Ministry or Family. Allow time to reflect on these questions and time for everyone to respond.

## 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.

- The Holy Spirit came with gifts. Which of these gifts are alive in you today?
- How do you intend to use these gifts given by the Holy Spirit to you?

## Group Contextual Sharing Questions

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

### For Small Christian Communities

We talk about what struck us in the passages of scripture and how we can share the Word of God as a community.

- Is your community open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit? How has the community done this?
- What is the Holy Spirit saying to the community at this meeting?

### For Ministry

We talk about what struck us in the passages of scripture and how we can share the Word of God as a ministry.

- How does the ministry discern the movement of the Holy Spirit?
- If we are not doing the work of the Holy Spirit, then what is the ministry doing?





## **For Family**

**We talk about what struck us in the passages of scripture and how we can share the Word of God as a family.**

- How does the family spend time together to discern the movement of the Holy Spirit in the life of the family?
- How can we better witness to the glory of the Word in our family life?

## **Take home**

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

For His promise to be experienced in us, we must live with the Easter joy, peace and hope.

## **Doing your bit**

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

Invite the person that you have been in touch with for the past few weeks to the Eucharistic celebration and introduce the person to some members of the community.

# 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.**

Heavenly Father, the message of hope in Your providence is very clear and powerful. You show Your care for us by sending us the Holy Spirit. Acknowledging this gift of the Holy Spirit, we act out the inspirations that flow from His promptings. We are blessed with His power that transforms our lives and those around us. Out of gratitude for Your love, we want to reach out to others with this Gift so that they too may be filled with the Holy Spirit and walk in Your ways. We make this prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.



# My Easter Reflection Journal

Invite the person that you have been in touch with for the past few weeks to the Eucharistic celebration and introduce the person to some members of the community.



## YOUR FEEDBACK IS IMPORTANT TO US!

Thanks for using this booklet!

We hope that the reflections have been helpful in accompanying you and your community to grow in your faith journey.

We sincerely invite you to give us your feedback for future improvements.

Please scan the QR code and it takes only a few minutes to complete the feedback form.

Thank you very much for your time and effort.



**[one.org.sg/feedback](https://one.org.sg/feedback)**

# Easter Activities

## Celebrating Sundays of Easter

### **Easter Sunday (9 April 2023)**

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 (16 April 2023)**

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

### **3rd Sunday of Easter (23 April 2023)**

Read the Hari Raya message from the Vatican or the Archbishop of Singapore. At this time, we join the Church in our prayers for universal solidarity and mutual respect.

### **4th Sunday of Easter (30 April 2023)**

On the eve of the Feast Day of St. Joseph, 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.

### **5th Sunday of Easter (7 May 2023)**

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.

### **6th Sunday of Easter (14 May 2023)**

Begin a nine day (from 19 May to 27 May 2023) novena prayer to the Holy Spirit on the day after Ascension Thursday.

### **7th Sunday of Easter (21 May 2023)**

Read the Holy Father Francis' message for the 57th 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 (28 May 2023)**

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



# 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
- a Bible

1. Have each of your family members 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.

# Easter Activities

## Celebrating Pentecost - Tongues of Fire – Mobile Sheet

Adapted from William H. Sadlier, Inc.

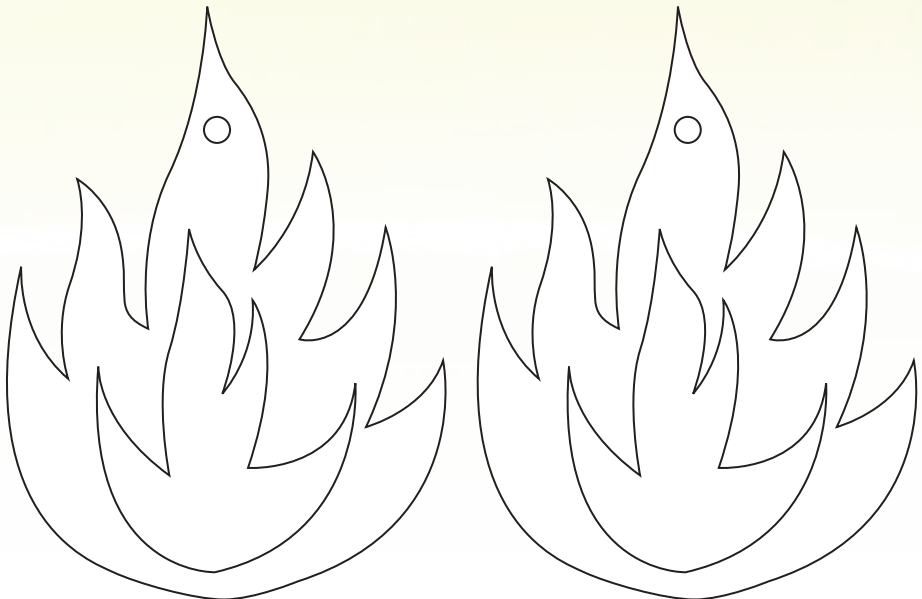
Bring the Good News of Jesus out into the world by making a mobile to show what you will do!

### 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.



# Acknowledgements

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