

2023 EASTER REFLECTION BOOKLET | YEAR A

The Word The Life of the World

5th Sunday of Easter

The Word Leads Us to Life



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Opening Prayer

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

5th Sunday of Easter

The Word Leads Us to Life

Readings

5th Sunday of Easter

The Word Leads Us to Life

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.

5th Sunday of Easter

The Word Leads Us to Life

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.

5th Sunday of Easter

The Word Leads Us to Life

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.

5th Sunday of Easter

The Word Leads Us to Life

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.

5th Sunday of Easter

The Word Leads Us to Life

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.”**

5th Sunday of Easter

The Word Leads Us to Life

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?”**

5th Sunday of Easter

The Word Leads Us to Life

Reflections

5th Sunday of Easter

The Word Leads Us to Life

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?

5th Sunday of Easter

The Word Leads Us to Life

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.

5th Sunday of Easter

The Word Leads Us to Life

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.

5th Sunday of Easter

The Word Leads Us to Life

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.

5th Sunday of Easter

The Word Leads Us to Life

Sharing Questions

5th Sunday of Easter

The Word Leads Us to Life

Personal Reflection & Sharing Questions

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?



5th Sunday of Easter

The Word Leads Us to Life

Sharing Questions

For Small Christian Communities

- 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?



5th Sunday of Easter

The Word Leads Us to Life

Sharing Questions For 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?



5th Sunday of Easter

The Word Leads Us to Life

Sharing Questions For 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?



5th Sunday of Easter

The Word Leads Us to Life

Take home

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



5th Sunday of Easter

The Word Leads Us to Life

Doing your bit

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

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.



Closing Prayer

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

