

2023 EASTER REFLECTION BOOKLET | YEAR A

The Word The Life of the World

6th Sunday of Easter

The Word is Love



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Opening Prayer

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.

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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



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Readings

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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Reflections

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“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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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Sharing Questions

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Personal Reflection & Sharing Questions

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?



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Sharing Questions

For Small Christian Communities

- 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?



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Sharing Questions For 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?



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Sharing Questions For 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?



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Take home

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



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Doing your bit

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



Closing Prayer

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.



Closing Prayer

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

