

2023 EASTER REFLECTION BOOKLET | YEAR A

The Word The Life of the World

7th Sunday of Easter

The Glorified Word Among Us



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Opening Prayer

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.

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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.

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Readings



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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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Reflections



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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).

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.



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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.

- 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?



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Sharing Questions

For Small Christian Communities

- 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?



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Sharing Questions
For 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?



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Sharing Questions

For 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?



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Take home

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



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Doing your bit

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

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.

