

Third Sunday of Easter



A Prayer for Sending Forth

God our Father,
you sent your Son,
who understands our human limitations,
invites our touch, and eats with us.
Hear our prayer, open our minds, and
help us understand the scriptures,
your word of life.

Strengthen us, and send us forth as
witnesses
to the Resurrection.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ,
your Son, who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God for ever and ever. Amen.

Sunday, April 22, 2011 Promises Kept

Today's Readings: Acts 3:13–15, 17–19; Psalm 4:2, 4, 7–8, 9 (7a); 1 John 2:1–5a; Luke 24:35–48. Desperation gives way to joy. All the promises are true! Jesus understands that it's hard for limited human minds to engage with primary truths, wonderful as they are and much as we want to believe them. Like the first visitors to the early tomb or the travelers to Emmaus, these disciples are at first stunned and disbelieving. In today's Gospel, Jesus offers reinforcement of his message through four senses: sight, hearing, touch, and taste—the primary channels through which all human learning flows. Only after the disciples have been satisfied at that level does he proceed to the more heady significance of scripture.

As he did with those en route to Emmaus, Jesus invites the disciples to look back on the events of his physical life and interprets them in light of Moses and the prophets. (As scholars point out, his past tense for “while I was with you” indicates that he is with them now in a different way.) He explains how his words and actions fulfilled the prophecies and psalms.

We too understand some things better in retrospect than in the moment. We can look back on difficult times and see how “Jesus stood in their midst” even then. Such reflection better equips us for mission. The last thing Jesus does is send the disciples forth. Naturally, upon hearing good news, anyone's first impulse is to share it.



This Week at Home

Monday, April 23

Saint George and Saint Adalbert

Today's Readings: Acts 6:8–15; Psalm 119:23–24, 26–27, 29–30 (1ab); John 6:22–29. The optional memorials of two saints may be celebrated today. Saint George is the patron saint of gardeners and farmers. Martyred in Palestine in early Christian times, he is the subject of many legends. A twelfth-century tale describes him slaying a dragon, freeing a princess, and converting Libya. Adalbert (939–997) became Bishop of Prague at the age of 27 and advocated clerical reform, an unpopular stand. He was exiled, worked in Rome, then in a monastery, and was a missionary in Hungary, Poland, and Germany, where he was martyred.

Tuesday, April 24

Saint Fidelis of Sigmaringen

Today's Readings: Acts 7:51–8:1a; Psalm 31:3cd–4, 6 and 7b and 8a, 17 and 21ab (6a); John 6:30–35. Nicknamed “the poor man’s lawyer” because he took so many cases for indigent people, Saint Fidelis (1577–1622), whose optional memorial may be celebrated today, grew tired of corruption in the judicial system and became a Capuchin priest. He took the dangerous job of preaching against Calvinists in Switzerland, which caused intense opposition. Violence increased, and a Calvinist offered him security. But Fidelis said his life was in God’s hands, and was then martyred.

Wednesday, April 25

Feast of Saint Mark

Today's Readings: 1 Peter 5:5b–14; Psalm 89:2–3, 6–7, 16–17 (2); Mark 16:15–20. Saint Mark is traditionally identified as the author of the first Gospel account and associated with John Mark from Acts 12:12. A cousin of Barnabas, he traveled on some of Saint Paul’s journeys. While many stories of Jesus were told orally, Mark wrote his account in Greek around 70 AD, perhaps in Rome or Syria. His shorter ending

(16:8) is abrupt and open-ended, perhaps intending that its readers (including us) would tell the Good News.

Thursday, April 26

A Hostile Reception

Today's Readings: Acts 8:26–40; Psalm 66:8–9, 16–17, 20 (1); John 6:44–51. Jesus was not always welcomed with reverent awe. In today’s Gospel, which parallels the institution of the Eucharist narratives in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, the crowd is puzzled and offended when Jesus describes himself as “the bread of life”—as food to be eaten.

Friday, April 27

Participating in the Life of God

Today's Readings: Acts 9:1–20; Psalm 117:1bc, 2 (Alleluia); John 6:52–59. Today’s Gospel continues yesterday’s words about eating Jesus’ flesh and drinking his blood—what we call Eucharist. To strengthen the believers, Jesus assures them of his continuing presence with them through the sacrament. Scripture scholar Raymond Brown points out that verse 57 is a powerful expression of the tremendous claim that Jesus offers: through him, human beings can participate in the very life of God.

Saturday, April 28

Saint Peter Chanel and Saint Louis Grignion de Montfort

Today's Readings: Acts 9:31–42; Psalm 116:12–13, 14–15, 16–17 (12); John 6:60–69. After the controversy over Jesus’ flesh and blood, many turned away from him. So it’s heartening to read of those who turned toward him. Saint Peter Chanel (1803–1841) was born in France but served as a missionary in the New Hebrides in the South Pacific. Three years after arriving, he became the first martyr of Oceania. Saint Louis (1673–1716), a French preacher and advocate of frequent Holy Communion, founded orders of men and women who cared for the poor. Thanks be to God for the sacrifices of these holy men celebrated today!



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 Keeping the Seasons

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