

First reading Acts 3:13-15,17-19**You killed the prince of life: God, however, raised him from the dead**

Peter said to the people: 'You are Israelites, and it is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our ancestors, who has glorified his servant Jesus, the same Jesus you handed over and then disowned in the presence of Pilate after Pilate had decided to release him. It was you who accused the Holy One, the Just One, you who demanded the reprieve of a murderer while you killed the prince of life. God, however, raised him from the dead, and to that fact we are the witnesses.

'Now I know, brothers, that neither you nor your leaders had any idea what you were really doing; this was the way God carried out what he had foretold, when he said through all his prophets that his Christ would suffer. Now you must repent and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out.'

Responsorial Psalm 4:2,4,7,9**Lift up the light of your face on us, O Lord.**

When I call, answer me, O God of justice; from anguish you released me, have mercy and hear me!

It is the Lord who grants favours to those whom he loves; the Lord hears me whenever I call him.

'What can bring us happiness?' many say.
Lift up the light of your face on us, O Lord.

I will lie down in peace and sleep comes at once for you alone, Lord, make me dwell in safety.

Second reading 1 John 2:1-5**Jesus Christ is the sacrifice that takes our sins away, and the world's**

I am writing this, my children, to stop you sinning; but if anyone should sin, we have our advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, who is just; he is the sacrifice that takes our sins away, and not only ours, but the whole world's.

We can be sure that we know God only by keeping his commandments.

Anyone who says, 'I know him', and does not keep his commandments, is a liar, refusing to admit the truth.

But when anyone does obey what he has said, God's love comes to perfection in him.

Gospel Acclamation cf.Lk24:32**Alleluia, alleluia!**

Lord Jesus, explain the Scriptures to us.
Make our hearts burn within us as you talk to us.

Alleluia!**Gospel Luke 24:35-48****It is written that the Christ would suffer and on the third day rise from the dead**

The disciples told their story of what had happened on the road and how they had recognised Jesus at the breaking of bread.

They were still talking about all this when Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, 'Peace be with you!' In a state of alarm and fright, they thought they were seeing a ghost. But he said, 'Why are you so agitated, and why are these doubts rising in your hearts? Look at my hands and feet; yes, it is I indeed. Touch me and see for yourselves; a ghost has no flesh and bones as you can see I have.' And as he said this he showed them his hands and feet. Their joy was so great that they still could not believe it, and they stood there dumbfounded; so he said to them, 'Have you anything here to eat?' And they offered him a piece of grilled fish, which he took and ate before their eyes.

Then he told them, 'This is what I meant when I said, while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses, in the Prophets and in the Psalms has to be fulfilled.' He then opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, 'So you see how it is written that the Christ would suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that, in his name, repentance for the forgiveness of sins would be preached to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses to this.'

Copyright: Scripture readings from the Jerusalem Bible are published and copyright 1966, 1967 and 1968 by Darton, Longman & Todd, Ltd and Doubleday, a division of Random House, Inc. Text of the Psalms: Copyright © 1963, The Grail (England). Used with permission of A.P. Watt Ltd. All rights reserved.

Feast Days this Week

Saturday 20th April: St Beuno (Wales)

The Cycle of Prayer**New Members of the Church**

In many communities and dioceses the Easter Season is a privileged time to celebrate the Sacraments of First Communion and Baptism.

Prayer

*Father, you give your Church
constant growth by adding new members
to your family.*

*Help us put into action in our lives the baptism
we have received in faith. Roman Missal*

In the Catholic tradition, a Homily, interprets the readings, shining a light on the present and asking each one of us what we must change in our lives, from today. The challenge is not so much about recounting the history or retelling the story, but living the gospel.

The gift of forgiveness

If we look back over our lives most of us will find something or other that we very much regret. We might remember speaking or acting in ways that hurt or damaged others. We might be aware of not doing something that we could have done and, that in our heart of hearts, wanted to do. Sometimes these experiences of personal failure can leave us very burdened. We can find it hard to move on from them; they trouble us and we struggle to be free of them. They can weigh heavily on us and drain us of energy. We can find ourselves going back in memory to them over and over again.

The first disciples of Jesus must have felt like this in the aftermath of Jesus' crucifixion. During the days of Jesus' final journey, they had all deserted him. Their mood in the aftermath of Good Friday can only have been one of deep regret. They must have felt that their relationship with Jesus was over. According to today's gospel, however, the first words the risen Jesus spoke to his disciples were, 'Peace be with you'. These words assured the disciples of the Lord's forgiveness. For those first disciples, the initial experience of the risen Lord took the form of a profound experience of forgiveness. This was the risen Lord's gift to them. The gift of forgiveness can be difficult to receive at times. We wonder if we are really forgiven. According to the gospel, when Jesus said 'Peace be with you', they responded with alarm and fright and thought that they might be seeing a ghost. The risen Jesus then questioned them, 'Why are you so agitated, and why are these doubts rising in your hearts?' It took the disciples a while to realise that they were forgiven.

It is only after the disciples had come to receive this gift of forgiveness that they were sent out as messengers of the Lord's forgiveness to others. According to our gospel, the risen Lord, having assured them that they were forgiven, went on to commission them to preach repentance for the forgiveness of sins to all the nations. It is forgiven sinners who are entrusted with the task of proclaiming the good news of God's forgiving love to all. This is what we find Peter doing in today's first reading. He declares to the people of Jerusalem that, although they had handed Jesus over to Pilate, God's forgiveness was available to them if they turned to God by believing in Jesus. The church has been faithful to the mission entrusted to the disciples, proclaiming down the centuries the good news that God's forgiveness is stronger than human sin. In raising Jesus from the dead and sending him back to those who had rejected him and failed him, God was declaring that he can raise anyone from their sins. The risen Jesus reveals a faithful, forgiving God. Today's 2nd Reading states this clearly: 'If anyone does sin, we have our advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, who is just'.

Before we can receive the Easter gift of God's forgiveness that comes to us through the risen Lord, we must first acknowledge our need of that gift. In the words of today's 2nd Reading, we need to admit the truth. The truth is that we are always in need of the gift of God's forgiveness. Recognising our need and asking God for the gift of forgiveness is what we call repentance. Peter in the first reading calls on the people of Jerusalem to repent and turn to God so that their sins may be wiped out. The risen Lord in the gospel sends out his disciples to preach repentance for the forgiveness of sins. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is a privileged opportunity to admit the truth, to acknowledge our need of God's forgiveness and to ask directly for it. In that sacrament that the risen Lord says to us, 'Peace be with you'. The words of absolution include the prayer, 'through the ministry of the church may God grant you pardon and peace'.

The first disciples, having received the gift of the Lord's forgiveness, were sent to spread that forgiveness to others. In a similar way, we who receive the same gift are sent out on the same mission. As forgiven sinners we proclaim with our lives the presence of a forgiving and faithful God. We extend to others the gift we have received from the Lord. This will not always come easy to us. Who was it who said, 'to err is human, to forgive is divine'? If that is true, we need divine help to do what is divine. In the verses that immediately follow where today's gospel ends, the risen Jesus promises his disciples that he would send the Holy Spirit upon them. It is only in the power of the Holy Spirit that they would be able to engage in the task that Jesus was entrusting to them. We need the same Spirit if we are to forgive as we have been forgiven. In the weeks ahead that lead up to the feast of Pentecost, we might pray the prayer, 'Come Holy Spirit, fill my heart and enkindle in me the fire of your love'. We could pray this prayer especially during those times when we find ourselves struggling to pass on to others the gift of forgiveness that we continue to receive from the Lord. [associationofcatholicpriests.ie](http://www.associationofcatholicpriests.ie)