

Reading for Weekday in the Third Week of Eastertide

April 22nd 2026

First reading

Acts 8:1b-8

‘They went about preaching the word.’

There arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the Apostles. Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him. But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison.

Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word. Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ. And the crowds with one accord paid attention to what was being said by Philip, when they heard him and saw the signs that he did. For unclean spirits, crying out with a loud voice, came out of many who had them, and many who were paralysed or lame were healed. So there was much joy in that city.

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 66(65):1-3a. 4-5. 6-7a. R1

Cry out with joy to God, all the earth.

or: Alleluia.

Cry out with joy to God, all the earth;

O sing to the glory of his name.

O render him glorious praise.

Say to God, ‘How wondrous your deeds!’

‘Before you all the earth shall bow down,
shall sing to you, sing to your name!’

Come and see the works of God:

his wondrous deeds among the children of Adam.

He turned the sea into dry land;

they passed through the river on foot.

Let our joy, then, be in him;

he rules for ever by his might.

Gospel Acclamation

Cf. John 6:40

Alleluia, alleluia.

Everyone who believes in the Son should have eternal life, says the Lord,
and I will raise him up on the last day.

Alleluia.

Gospel

John 6:35-40

‘This is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son should have eternal life.’

At that time: Jesus said to the crowd, ‘I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.’

Short reflection on the reading for today

Jerusalem, which had been a special place of Jesus' ministry, violently rejected his disciples, while outsiders, particularly in Samaria, accepted his word, were willing to accept miracles, and were converted and baptised. Sophisticated Jerusalem with its religious schools and centuries-old traditions, never gives Jesus or his disciples a fair hearing; while the despised Samaritans responded with joy to the gospel message.

Comparing Jerusalem with Samaria alerts us to the fact that believing the gospel is more than just an intellectual assent to religious doctrine. In Jerusalem the sacred tradition of Moses was preserved, by the central governing body of Judaism. Yet, Jerusalem violently rejected Jesus and his first disciples. There was a direct simplicity about the Samaritans' outlook that made them open to new possibilities. Because they were not afraid of saying *Yes* to something new, the flower of faith bloomed among them. The Bread of Life is most readily received by the humble of heart.

Philip shares the gospel in Samaria and his message is warmly welcomed. In Luke's first volume, Jesus tried to speak to the Samaritans but they rejected him because he was heading for Jerusalem. But later they welcomed his gospel with great joy, on hearing it from the lips of Philip the deacon. God's word can blossom even where it was first rejected. Even though we may turn from the Lord at times, he never turns his back on us. Indeed we have Jesus' own word that, "Whoever comes to me I shall not turn away." Easter celebrates the faithfulness of God to his Son Jesus, and the faithfulness of Jesus to all of us. God's faithfulness encourages us to keep turning back to him, to keep coming to him, even after we have turned away from him. Even when we fail to respond to his coming, he offers himself to us as the bread of life and he continues to promise us that if we come to him we will never hunger and if we believe in him we will never thirst.