

Reading for Weekday in the Third Week of Eastertide

April 24th 2026

First reading

Acts 9:1-20

‘He is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles.’

In those days: Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?’ And he said, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ And he said, ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.’ The men who were travelling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. Saul rose from the ground, and although his eyes were opened, he saw nothing. So they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. And for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, ‘Ananias.’ And he said, ‘Here I am, Lord.’ And the Lord said to him, ‘Rise and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul, for behold, he is praying, and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight.’ But Ananias answered, ‘Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem. And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name.’ But the Lord said to him, ‘Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.’ So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, ‘Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.’ And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptised; and taking food, he was strengthened. For some days he was with the disciples at Damascus. And immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, saying, ‘He is the Son of God.’

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 117(116):1. 2. R. Mark 16:15

Go into all the world and proclaim the good news.

or: Alleluia.

O praise the Lord, all you nations;

acclaim him, all you peoples!

For his mercy has prevailed over us;

and the faithfulness of the Lord endures for ever.

Gospel Acclamation

John 6:56

Alleluia, alleluia.

Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood, says the Lord,
abides in me, and I in him.

Alleluia.

Gospel

John 6:52-59

‘For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink.’

At that time: The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, ‘How can this man give us his flesh to eat?’ So Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate, and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live for ever.’ Jesus said these things in the synagogue, as he taught at Capernaum.

Short reflection on the reading for today

Saint Paul’s conversion is reported in three separate accounts in the Acts of the Apostles (see also 22:4-26; 26:12-18). The first of these, which was read today, leads on to the spread of the church beyond Judaism to the Gentile world. Immediately before it is another conversion story, about the Ethiopian pilgrim who was baptized by Philip the deacon; and soon afterwards comes the conversion of the Roman centurion, Cornelius. Both the Ethiopian and Cornelius were received into the church without needing to first convert to Judaism (by circumcision and all the Jewish customs). The baptism of those two foreigners has the same sudden quality as Saul’s conversion... each took place because of a special, divine intervention.

Saul had been vigorously opposing the church in Jerusalem, and now he proposed to do the same in Damascus. After his conversion, he would create an entirely new problem for the disciples of Jesus. In his fervent desire to bring the Gospel to the Gentiles, Saul (now called Paul) insisted that there was no need to be circumcised or to follow many Jewish rules and regulations about food and drink, in order to be a follower of Jesus. His insistence on this point caused a serious split in the church that lasted for some years. This sharp quarrel surfaces in Paul’s letter to the Galatians and in chapter 15 of Acts. For years he was branded as a traitor by his former Jewish colleagues, and was isolated even in the Christian community. When it was predicted that Paul would have much to suffer for Jesus’ sake, it meant not just his eventual martyrdom but his long struggle for acceptance by the Jewish-conservative wing of the church.

Once he began to follow Jesus, both Paul and those who were Christians before him had to deal with the consequences. Not for years was it fully accepted that Paul’s mission to the pagans was inspired by God, as the best way forward for the church. He may have bristled at the obstinacy of the conservatives, but eventually they all learned to compromise and share in the fraternity of the faith. This process of reconciliation is as vital for our church today as in the days of Peter and Paul.