

Reading for Weekday in the Fourth Week of Eastertide

26th April 2024

1st Reading: Acts 13:26-33

Jesus was put to death, but raised and exalted by God

[Paul went on to say]

“My brothers, you descendants of Abraham’s family, and others who fear God, to us the message of this salvation has been sent. Because the residents of Jerusalem and their leaders did not recognize him or understand the words of the prophets that are read every sabbath, they fulfilled those words by condemning him. Even though they found no cause for a sentence of death, they asked Pilate to have him killed. When they had carried out everything that was written about him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb. But God raised him from the dead; and for many days he appeared to those who came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, and they are now his witnesses to the people. And we bring you the good news that what God promised to our ancestors he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising Jesus; as also it is written in the second Psalm, “You are my Son; today I have begotten you.”

Responsorial: Psalm 2: 6-11

R./: You are my Son; this day I have begotten you.

‘It is I who have set up my king
on Zion, my holy mountain.’

I will announce the decree of the Lord:

The Lord said to me: ‘You are my Son.

It is I who have begotten you this day.’ (R./)

‘Ask and I shall bequeath you the nations,
put the ends of the earth in your possession.

With a rod of iron you will break them,
shatter them like a potter’s jar.’ (R./)

Now, O kings, understand,

take warning rulers of the earth;

serve the Lord with awe

and trembling, pay him your homage. (R./)

Gospel Acclamation

Alleluia, alleluia!

I am the Way, the Truth and the Life, says the Lord;

No one can come to the Father except through me.

Alleluia!

Gospel: John 14:1-6

In my Father's house there are many dwelling places

Jesus said,

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going.” Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

Short reflection on the readings for today

Pope Francis has said that the doors of our church should be open wide and welcoming. This is a refreshing contrast antidote to the narrow, legalistic form of church favoured by those who refer constantly to the barriers against eucharistic communion with Christians of other churches.

What a positive tone resonates to those Last Supper words of Jesus: “I am the way, and the truth, and the life.” This is central to our faith. To be trying to know the truth means that we are already on the right way. Christ draws people even before they start to look for him. The flower is touched by sunlight before it turns toward the sun.

In his synagogue sermon Paul roamed through the Hebrew Bible, beginning with the patriarchs and Moses and ending with John the Baptist preparing the way for Jesus. Some of this was already in yesterday's reading. But in the second half of this sermon, Paul speaks directly to the situation of his hearers. He turns from the *written* word to the message *spoken* by the living God. The whole Bible, he says, leads up to Jesus, who gives each event its full meaning. Paul moves from the parchment to the person, calling us to move on from formal doctrine and have personal experience of Jesus.

We “followers of the way” must move beyond and below the creed to refresh our personal encounter with the Lord who speaks to our hearts. We are also on “the way” even when sin or misfortune makes us desolate. Even in times of turmoil and struggle, we are still “on the way,” with Jesus. Just as there are many mansions in the Father's house, so the ways that lead to those mansions are many and varied. The only absolute guideline Jesus gives about staying on track with him is the commandment of love, that *agapé* which was the hallmark of his whole life on earth.

This gospel is a favourite for funerals and is easy to see why. Jesus tells his disciples that though he is leaving them by death, he is really going back to the God from whom he came. He promises that we too will make the journey after him. He will return to take us with him into the Father's house for which we are destined. Jesus came among us to show the way to the Father. His whole purpose was to bring God to us and us to God.

The many rooms in the Father's house indicate a place of universal hospitality. Heaven is not an elite place for a select few, but an open space for the many, just as Jesus did not come for the sake of the just, but for sinners. He is the Way to the Father for all who follow him. He promised that, when lifted up from the earth, he would draw all people to himself. If we follow him as our Way in this life, we will in the end come to live with him in the Father's house.

