

Reading for Weekday in the Third Week of Eastertide

10th May 2025

First reading

Acts 9:31-42

‘The church was being built up and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit.’

In those days: The church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied. Now as Peter went here and there among them all, he came down also to the saints who lived at Lydda. There he found a man named Aeneas, bedridden for eight years, who was paralysed. And Peter said to him, ‘Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you; rise and make your bed.’ And immediately he rose. And all the residents of Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they turned to the Lord.

Now there was in Joppa a disciple named Tabitha, which, translated, means Dorcas. She was full of good works and acts of charity. In those days she became ill and died, and when they had washed her, they laid her in an upper room. Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, hearing that Peter was there, sent two men to him, urging him, ‘Please come to us without delay.’ So Peter rose and went with them. And when he arrived, they took him to the upper room. All the widows stood beside him weeping and showing tunics and other garments that Dorcas made while she was with them. But Peter put them all outside, and knelt down and prayed; and turning to the body he said, ‘Tabitha, arise.’ And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up. And he gave her his hand and raised her up. Then, calling the saints and widows, he presented her alive. And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed in the Lord.

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 116(115):12-13. 14-15. 16-17. R12

How can I repay the Lord for all his goodness to me?

or: Alleluia.

How can I repay the Lord

for all his goodness to me?

The cup of salvation I will raise;

I will call on the name of the Lord.

My vows to the Lord I will fulfil

before all his people.

How precious in the eyes of the Lord

is the death of his faithful.

Your servant, Lord, your servant am I,

the son of your handmaid;

you have loosened my bonds.

I will offer you a thanksgiving sacrifice;

I will call on the name of the Lord.

Gospel Acclamation

Cf. John 6:63c, 68c

Alleluia, alleluia.

Your words, O Lord, are spirit and life;

you have the words of eternal life.

Alleluia.

Gospel

John 6:60-69

‘Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.’

At that time: Many of the disciples of Jesus said, ‘This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?’ But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, said to them, ‘Do you take offence at this? Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. But there are some of you who do not believe.’ For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him. And he said, ‘This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.’ After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him.

So Jesus said to the Twelve, ‘Do you want to go away as well?’ Simon Peter answered him, ‘Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.’

Short reflection on the reading for today

Through the Easter season the risen Christ brings life to what seemed dead within us, to make our faith blossom again. We can have a kind of spiritual rebirth, like the woman in Lydda who was revived by St Peter in today’s story from the Acts. Her name was Dorcas and her spirit of charity and compassion had endeared her to many, especially the widows and the needy. They felt her loss keenly, and of course were delighted to have her back among them, alive and well.

“It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh cannot do so,” said Jesus. “The words I spoke to you are spirit and life.” When others began to move away from Jesus, unsure about what kind of way he was leading them, Peter made it clear that he would stay. “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.” If we decide to follow Peter’s example, we must trust that Jesus really does point the way to union with God. His words and his spirit can achieve what is beyond the power of human nature. “It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh cannot do so.”

Peter’s efforts to bring the faith to the wider world are reflected in the Acts of the Apostles, showing how he often had the power to work miracles. What part can we ordinary people play in carrying on Peter’s ministry of encouragement and healing? We may find practical ways of helping others, as Dorcas did, finding ways to help the poor, speaking out on behalf of justice, or just listening with empathy to our neighbour’s ailments. If we are sometimes challenged to go beyond our comfort zone and attempt what seems impossible, let’s remember that “It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh cannot do so.”

Jesus often asked his followers probing questions, to challenge the quality of their faith.. During a critical time when many were falling away, he asked them, ‘What about you, do you want to go away too?’ In the previous verses many would-be followers had abandoned Jesus because he spoke about eating his flesh and drinking his blood. Their turning their back on him prompted Jesus to put his faithful few to the test: ‘Do you want to go away too?’ He was probing, inviting them to make a personal commitment to stay with him; for they were free to leave him like so many others.

The risen Lord also looks for commitment from us: ‘do you want to go away too?’ In our modern world many have turned away from faith. So we each need to make a more personal, deliberate decision about faith than was required in the past. As we try to make that decision we can do no better than to make Peter’s words our own: ‘Lord, you have the message of eternal life, and we believe that you are the Holy One of God.’