

Reading for Weekday in the Third week of Eastertide

April 23rd 2026

First reading

Acts 8:26-36, 38-40

‘See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptised?’

In those days: An angel of the Lord said to Philip, ‘Rise and go towards the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.’ This is a desert place. And he rose and went. And there was an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure. He had come to Jerusalem to worship and was returning, seated in his chariot, and he was reading the prophet Isaiah. And the Spirit said to Philip, ‘Go over and join this chariot.’ So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, ‘Do you understand what you are reading?’ And he said, ‘How can I, unless someone guides me?’ And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. Now the passage of the Scripture that he was reading was this: ‘Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter and like a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he opens not his mouth. In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth.’

And the eunuch said to Philip, ‘About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?’ Then Philip opened his mouth, and, beginning with this Scripture, he told him the good news about Jesus. And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, ‘See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptised?’ And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptised him. And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing. But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through he preached the gospel to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 66(65):8-9. 16-17. 20. R1

Cry out with joy to God, all the earth.

or: Alleluia.

O peoples, bless our God;
let the voice of his praise resound,
of the God who gave life to our souls
and kept our feet from stumbling.
Come and hear, all who fear God;
I will tell what he did for my soul.
To him I cried aloud,
with exaltation ready on my tongue.
Blest be God, who did not reject my prayer,
nor withhold from me his merciful love.

Gospel Acclamation

John 6:51

Alleluia, alleluia.

I am the living bread that came down from heaven, says the Lord.

If anyone eats of this bread, he will live for ever.

Alleluia.

Gospel

John 6:44-51

‘I am the living bread that came down from heaven.’

At that time: Jesus said to the crowd, ‘No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. It is written in the Prophets, “And they will all be taught by God.” Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me — not that anyone has seen the Father except he who is from God; he has seen the Father. Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live for ever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.’

Short reflection on the reading for today

God was already drawing the Ethiopian eunuch towards the faith, before ever he met with Philip on the road from Jerusalem to Gaza. This wealthy Ethiopian civil servant was a God-fearing gentile who worshiped Yahweh, and followed whatever Torah rules he could, in his actual situation. The Spirit was attracting this man to a deeper understanding of life, through reading the prophet Isaiah’s *Songs of the Suffering Servant*. When the cheerful deacon Philip chose to travel the same road as the Ethiopian, divine providence was clearly at work. The foreigner was grappling with the Scriptures, but unable to understand their mysterious message.

Listening to this man reading aloud from Isaiah, Philip asked him “Do you understand what you are reading?” and the pilgrim replied politely, “How can I unless someone explains it to me?” When he heard how the words of the Suffering Servant pointed to Jesus’ death on the cross, the Ethiopian found faith in Jesus and asked to be baptized. Notice the steps of his conversion, not really a move from sin to grace, but taking an opportunity offered by grace, and wanting its full impact in his life.

Like the Ethiopian officer we are called to be “God-fearers” who draw near to God and seek to know what life expects of us. Like this pilgrim, we should join in worship, as he did in the temple in Jerusalem. And on his way back home, he was still hoping for God to enlighten him. After his leap of understanding, he was baptised and was saved in Christ.

The helpful, hospitable church represented by Philip is the ideal urged on us by Pope Francis — who wanted to see the joy of the Gospel shine on the lives of all who welcome it. We too can help spread the good news, like the Ethiopian who went home to bring the faith to his own country.

In the church we receive not only sacramental presence of Jesus but also the guidance and example we need to keep our faith strong. Remember his words: “I am the living bread come down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread that shall live forever.”