

Sunday, April 27, 2025 – Second Sunday of Easter

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Introduction

In spite of all we have heard and all we have seen, it is often hard to believe. Because it is hard to believe, we will invest ourselves in the Easter mystery for fifty days (a week of weeks). Because it is hard to believe, John the evangelist will provide sign after sign celebrating Jesus' victory over death. Because it is hard to believe, the risen Jesus will return to us again and again in the mystery of holy communion, inviting us to touch and taste his presence, and offering us his peace.

Prayer of the Day

O God of life, you reach out to us amid our fears with the wounded hands of your risen Son. By your Spirit's breath revive our faith in your mercy, and strengthen us to be the body of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

First Reading: Acts 5:27-32

²⁷ When they had brought [the apostles,] they had them stand before the council. The high priest questioned them, ²⁸ saying, "We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and you are determined to bring this man's blood on us." ²⁹ But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than any human authority. ³⁰ The God of our ancestors raised up Jesus, whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree. ³¹ God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior that he might give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. ³² And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him."

Psalm 118:14-29

¹⁴ The LORD is my strength and my song,
and has become my salvation.

¹⁵ **Shouts of rejoicing and salvation echo in the tents of the righteous:**
"The right hand of the LORD acts valiantly!

¹⁶ The right hand of the LORD is exalted!
The right hand of the LORD acts valiantly!"

¹⁷ **I shall not die, but live,**
and declare the works of the LORD.

- ¹⁸ The LORD indeed punished me sorely,
but did not hand me over to death.
- ¹⁹ **Open for me the gates of righteousness;
I will enter them and give thanks to the LORD.**
- ²⁰ “This is the gate of the LORD;
here the righteous may enter.”
- ²¹ **I give thanks to you, for you have answered me
and you have become my salvation.**
- ²² The stone that the builders rejected
has become the chief cornerstone.
- ²³ **By the LORD has this been done;
it is marvelous in our eyes.**
- ²⁴ This is the day that the LORD has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it.
- ²⁵ **Hosanna! O LORD, save us!
We pray to you, LORD, prosper our days!**
- ²⁶ Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the LORD;
we bless you from the house of the LORD.
- ²⁷ **The LORD is God and has given us light.
Form a procession with branches up to the corners of the altar.**
- ²⁸ You are my God, and I will thank you;
you are my God, and I will exalt you.
- ²⁹ **Give thanks to the LORD, for the LORD is good;
God’s mercy endures forever.**

Second Reading: Revelation 1:4-8

⁴ John to the seven churches that are in Asia:

Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, ⁵ and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, ⁶ and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

⁷ Look! He is coming with the clouds;
every eye will see him,
even those who pierced him;
and on his account all the tribes of the earth will wail.

So it is to be. Amen.

⁸ “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.

Gospel: John 20:19-31

¹⁹ When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." ²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. ²¹ Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." ²² When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

²⁴ But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe."

²⁶ A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe." ²⁸ Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" ²⁹ Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."

³⁰ Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. ³¹ But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

Prayers of Intercession

God of resurrection and new life, we come before you in prayer for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

A brief silence.

Inspire the church with the breath of your Holy Spirit, that we sing the good news of the resurrection. Inspire deacons and pastors, lay leaders and bishops to boldly proclaim your love for all people. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Preserve the earth as a safe home for all creatures. Restore habitats contaminated by pollution or overuse, strengthen efforts to shape more sustainable communities, and make us mindful of the impacts of our daily lives on the well-being of creation. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Kindle in the nations a spirit of cooperation and mutual care. Raise up creative and courageous leaders committed to shaping just solutions to complex challenges in our local and global communities. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Embrace all who carry wounds, that they might know your compassion. Draw near to those with chronic pain or anxiety, and all for whom death is near. Comfort individuals and communities suffering in any way. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Transform our fear into curiosity and love, especially across differences in race, religion, sexuality, gender identity, and economic situation. Unravel stereotypes that lead to discrimination, and destroy oppressive systems that marginalize vulnerable communities. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We remember the faithful departed from all times and places. Confident that you are the Alpha and Omega, we pray for your wisdom and guidance until our earthly pilgrimage is complete. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We commend these and all our prayers to you, O God, trusting that you are always with us; in the name of Jesus Christ, our risen Savior.

Amen.

Reflection

Can I Get a Witness?

The texts for today explore what it means to be a witness: the power of seeing and experiencing the resurrection firsthand. For those of us who weren't there in person to witness Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension, a question persists: How do we give witness? How have we experienced Easter firsthand? What do we need to see, to touch, to hear in order to believe?

The witness given in our readings today is extraordinary. "Doubting" Thomas comes up with one of the most powerful, concise creeds in all of scripture: "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28). Peter and the apostles affirm their belief in Christ at great risk to themselves and their families. The Spirit is at work, giving ordinary, doubting people extraordinary boldness to declare the core beliefs of Christian faith. God works in surprising ways, through unexpected people, to share the good news of Easter. With the Spirit's help, we can give witness too.



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