

# Our Sunday Readings

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES  
10:34a,37-43  
PSALM 118:1-2,16-17,22-23  
COLOSSIANS 3:1-4 or  
1 CORINTHIANS 5:6b-8  
JOHN 20:1-9

## He is Risen

### ACTS 10:34a,37-43

#### Reading closely

1. What are the main aspects of Jesus' story that Peter highlights?
2. If people were hearing about Jesus for the first time, what questions might they have asked?
3. How might people have reacted differently to the various aspects of Jesus' story?

#### Living the word

4. What parts of Jesus' story would you highlight?
5. What part of Jesus' story is the most important to you at this moment in your life?

### THE FIRST READING

#### In the home of Cornelius

Peter is speaking to the friends and family members of Cornelius. Though a Gentile, Cornelius is *devout and God-fearing* (10:2). Cornelius had a vision in which God told him to invite Peter into his home. Peter, however, is a devout Jew who would not have entered the home of a Gentile had he not been instructed to do so by the holy Spirit.

#### For everyone

Peter and the other apostles didn't know that God planned to offer salvation to everyone. They were Jewish just as Jesus was Jewish, and so for generations their faith and practices had set them apart from non-Jews.

Jesus' followers thus struggled to believe that through their Jewish messiah God was offering salvation to everyone, both Jews and Gentiles. The meeting between Peter and Cornelius becomes the pivotal moment in which God's salvation is formally extended to the Gentiles.

#### A pivotal speech

Peter's words in this passage are his last major speech in the Acts of the Apostles. This passage is especially suitable for Easter Sunday because it captures the main elements of Christian belief and emphasizes that God offers salvation to all.

Peter's speech also transitions us from hearing about Jesus' ministry and death to hearing how his followers spread the gospel from Jerusalem to the wider world.

## JOHN 20:1-9

### Reading closely

1. Why do you think Mary goes to Jesus' tomb?
2. Why is it noteworthy that these events occur *while it is still dark*?
3. What all might Mary be thinking and feeling as she runs to tell the male disciples?
4. Why do you think Peter and the other disciple rush to the tomb?
5. What exactly do the two male disciples find?
6. What are all the explanations Peter might have for what he sees in the tomb?
7. What might the three disciples say to each other after they see that Jesus' tomb is empty?
8. Do you think either of the two men tell anyone about what happened?

### Living the word

9. What are some reasons people find it difficult to believe that Jesus rose from the dead?
10. Why do you think some people find it easier than other people to believe in Jesus?
11. How do you think you would have reacted if you had been at the empty tomb?

## THE GOSPEL READING

### Stories of the empty tomb

The author of this Gospel reshaped earlier versions of this story. He notes that a woman is the first to find the tomb empty, but he doesn't explain why she's there. She can't have come to anoint Jesus' body because in this Gospel Jesus' body was already anointed (19:39-40). Also, Mary tells the disciples that "we don't know where they put him," implying she had been joined by other women.

### Two male witnesses

According to Jewish law at least two witnesses were required for legal testimony to be valid (Deuteronomy 19:15). These witnesses had to be men, however, which meant that the testimony of Jesus' female disciples would have been ignored. This Gospel-writer is thus careful to show that two men verify Mary's report. Ironically, the fact that all four Gospels note the embarrassing detail that women were the first to find the tomb empty serves to strengthen the story's credibility.

### The burial cloths

The details about Jesus' burial cloths serve two purposes. First, they show that Jesus' body was not stolen by grave-robbers. Thieves would not take the time to tidy up.

Second, and more importantly, this Gospel-writer again highlights Jesus' power over life and death. In John 11, after bringing his friend Lazarus back to life, Jesus orders people to unwrap the burial cloths that bind Lazarus (v.44). Jesus himself needs no such help. In John 10:17-18 Jesus declares that he freely gives his life and takes up his life again. Jesus doesn't need anyone to help him out of burial cloths or out of the tomb.

### The disciple whom Jesus loved

Although scholars have speculated about the identity of *the disciple whom Jesus loved*, also called the Beloved Disciple, we will never know who he was. He has deliberately concealed his identity. He might be someone who founded or helped form the community from which this Gospel emerged.

This disciple is first mentioned in John 13:23, right before the story of Jesus' Passion and death. His appearances in the narrative enhance the story's credibility while his anonymity keeps the focus on Jesus. This disciple's anonymity also enables him to appear as a model of faith for later generations: he believes without seeing the risen Jesus.

## PRAYER

*Opening Prayer for Easter Sunday*

O God, who on this day  
 through your only begotten Son  
 have conquered death  
 and unlocked for us the path to eternity,  
 grant, we pray,  
 that we who keep the solemnity of the Lord's  
 resurrection may,  
 through the renewal brought by your Spirit,  
 rise up in the light of life.  
 Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
 who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the  
 Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.