



THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER

CYCLE C

Acts 5:27-32, 40-41

Revelation 5:11-14

John 21:1-19

GATHERING

(A table in the gathering place is set with a lit candle, some fresh Spring flowers, and a loaf of sweet or fruit-filled bread.)

Our Easter celebration continues. This week we celebrate with thousands and thousands who gather with the Lamb before the One who sits on the throne. We also encounter again our call to mission. *(The session begins with some sharing about how Easter energy has moved the members to share God's love this past week.)*

OPENING PRAYER

(The facilitator calls the community to prayer.)

God Is Today

Member: God is today.
He is not yesterday.
He is not tomorrow.

God is the dawn, wakening earth to life;

the first morning ever,
shining with infinite innocence; a revelation
older than all beginning, younger than youth.
God is the noon, blinding the eye of the mind
with the blaze of truth.
God is the sunset, casting over creation
a color of glory
as He withdraws into mysteries of light.

God is today.
He is not yesterday.
He is not tomorrow.
He never is night.

Regina Siegfried and Robert Morneau., ed. *Selected Poetry of Jessica Powers* (Kansas City, MO: Sheed & Ward, 1989), p. 13. Used with permission.

Focus Question

Recall a time when you gave free rein to exuberant joy.

SCRIPTURE SHARING AND REFLECTION

Commentary

By this third week of Easter the flowers around the altar are beginning to fade, but in heaven Easter season is still in full bloom. Witness the glorious liturgy in the heavenly sanctuary that John portrays in this week's reading from Revelation. Listen to the voices of the thousands upon thousands around God's throne: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches, wisdom and strength, honor and glory and praise!"

John preaches what theologians would call a high Christology; a doctrine of Jesus looked at from above. Characteristic of John, this high Christology is introduced at the very beginning of his gospel. In the prologue we hear, "In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God (John 1:11)." Here in the book of Revelation, we see the crowning image: "the One seated on the throne" and "the Lamb" given equal worship.

For its part, the scene portrayed in this week's gospel exudes a contrasting, and uniquely human, charm: disciples fishing at night, Jesus calling to them from the shore at daybreak, fish laid upon a charcoal fire, bread, Jesus' invitation to eat. While biblical scholars generally see this chapter 21 of John to be a somewhat later addition, the church has retained it in the canonical form of the gospel. Taking its imagery together with that of the book of Revelation, we encounter in today's liturgy a strong portrayal of the risen Jesus as *fully human and divine*.

In Chapter 20 of the gospel of John, he has already presented a post-resurrection encounter between Jesus and his disciples. It also contains a missionary command and tells of the gift of the Spirit. With the addition of this story, the disciples are portrayed, not yet on mission, but back at the routine of daily life. And, as is often the case, it seems so humdrum. They have worked and worked, but have nothing to show for it. In the emptiness of it all, Jesus approaches. They respond to the call of the stranger and encounter the Lord once again. The catch is overwhelming and he nourishes them with bread and fish.

The recounting of Jesus' exchange with Simon begins a new narrative development. Its interpretation typically concentrates focus on those features dealing with Peter's reconciliation with Jesus and his call to mission. While the story of Jesus's encounter with the disciples on the shore is complete in itself, the continuation of the imagery of feeding also invites a reading that ties the two stories together in a way that lends itself to a more corporate appreciation of the larger narrative. *Come, be fed by the Lord*, they say to the church, *and, in turn, feed God's people*. It is not enough for us to be nourished by the Lord. However glorious the Easter worship, we are called *to serve*.

Appended to the original gospel of John, which, in Chapter 20, has already portrayed an encounter with the risen Jesus and a missionary charge, the effect of this new encounter with Jesus might be taken to be a nudge to the still dallying disciples to get on with it. Might its proclamation in this week's Easter liturgy be meant to nudge us as well?

Sustained, empowered and encouraged by the Lamb that was slain – to whom be honor and glory and praise – let us get on with the feeding of God's people.

FAITH SHARING AND INTEGRATION

(The community pauses in silence to ponder the scriptures and the questions which follow.)

1. When do you need to focus on Jesus' humanity? When do you need to focus on him as divine?
2. When have you had a sense of God's presence in the humdrum of daily life?
3. When/how do you experience your own resistance to Christ's call to feed his people?

RESPONSE IN ACTION

1. Be attentive to some experience of emptiness this coming week. Acknowledge it. Honor it. Spend time with it without just trying to get rid of it. Listen to what it offers you. Listen for the stranger who might call to you in the midst of it.
2. East African dioceses have a major commitment to the development of small church communities. Maryknoller, Fr. Joe Healey is offering to be a contact person for small church communities that would like to twin (e.g., exchange letters that share mutual experiences of small Christian community in the respective cultural and social situations) with small church communities in Tanzania. You may reach him as follows: Fr. Joseph Healey, M.M., Maryknoll Fathers, P.O. Box 867, Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania.
3. Support the establishment of God's reign in our world. Join Network, a Catholic justice lobby in Washington, D.C. You may contact this group at: 801 Pennsylvania Ave., S.E. Suite 460, Washington, DC 20003; (202) 547-5556.

SENDING FORTH AND CLOSING PRAYER

Leader: Creator Spirit, hidden builder of the Kingdom,
by the power of your saints guide the Church

[to move into] the new millennium and to carry to the coming generations
the light of the Word who brings salvation.

All: Come, Spirit of love and peace!

Leader: To you, Spirit of love,
with the Almighty Father and the Only-Begotten Son,
be praise, honour and glory
for ever and ever. Amen.

From the official prayer for the second year of millennial preparation. by the Holy Father

*(A recording of "Behold the Lamb of God" or some other appropriate selection from an Easter cycle recording of Handel's **Messiah** is played. The loaf of sweet bread is passed for the members to enjoy. The leftover portion is divided up for people to take home with them.)*

(The session closes with the exchange of a sign of Easter peace.)

