

Reflection for the Easter Vigil, Cycles A, B & C

The lectionary translation of the readings for this Sunday can be found at <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/041925.cfm>

1st Reading: *Genesis 1:1–2:2 or Genesis 1:1, 26-31*

This is the story of the 7 days of creation from Genesis. We all know it. As we hear it proclaimed, we reflect on the gift of life and how good it is.

2nd Reading: *Genesis 22:1–18 or Genesis 22:1-2,9a,10-13,15-18*

This reading is also from Genesis. It's the story of Abraham's sacrifice. As it is proclaimed, wait to hear that God does not want us to offer human sacrifice. He will provide the sacrifice.

3rd Reading: *Exodus 14:15–15:1*

Now we hear from the Book of Exodus. It's another story we all know. Listen to hear that no matter what evil is pursuing us, God will hear our pray and save us in some way or another.

4th Reading: *Isaiah 54:5–14*

This is an oracle from the Prophet Isaiah. It was probably given after the Babylonian captivity when the Jewish people went back to rebuild Jerusalem. There was huge disappointment and depression as they witnessed their destroyed city and had trouble organizing to rebuild it. They knew their suffering was the result of their sins. Here God reassures them and tells them that he chooses not to be angry with them and he will renew the life of his people.

5th Reading: *Isaiah 55:1–11*

This reading comes from a section of the Book of Isaiah, chapters 40-55, which are all about the impending liberation from the Babylonian captivity. This selection invites the people to have faith in the prophetic Word that has been given them and open themselves to their coming salvation. It invites us to have faith in God's Word as given us in the Gospel and by the handing on of Tradition.

6th Reading: *Baruch 3:9–15,32-4:4*

This is a portion of a much longer poem in the Book of Baruch. It's the first of three parts and pretty much summarizes the main content. It speaks to a people who are not living wisely, not keeping the Law. He extols the wisdom of living God's Law and the benefits of doing so. It speaks of the foretaste of salvation we can experience in this life.

7th Reading: *Ezekiel 36:16–17a,18-28*

This oracle from Ezekiel speaks to the people of the diaspora, the Jewish people scattered because of the Babylonian captivity and the destruction of Jerusalem. God says he will ignore their sinfulness and bring them back to their land for the sake of His holy name. They will experience this worldly salvation through no worthiness of their own. What does it mean for God to bring us back to our land?

Epistle: *Romans 6:3–11*

We come to the New Testament letter of Paul to the Romans. In our selection tonight, he speaks of the death and newness of life of Baptism. This is why I think it is better to use emersion as the form of baptism. We can't do that here, so I use plenty of water to give the people the feeling of being cleansed of their sinfulness as they walk into the newness of life that Christian living brings.

Gospel: *Luke 24:1–12*

At daybreak on the first day of the week, the women take their spices to the tomb, find it empty and 2 men appear telling them, Why do you seek the living among the dead, He has been raised. They tell the apostles and others who don't believe them. Peter runs to the tomb and sees it empty and goes home amazed.

Gospel Reflection

I'm amazed. I'm not excited, or overjoyed, or feeling any particular type of emotion, I'm just amazed.

The women that went to the tomb found the stone rolled away and the tomb empty. Two men in dazzling clothes told them Jesus had been raised and reminded them that he had said that would happen.

They remembered, and then... "they returned from the tomb and announced all these things to the eleven." They didn't go rushing back, full of excitement, to tell the others that Jesus had been raised like they do in Matthew's Gospel. According to Luke, they merely "returned from the tomb and announced all these things..." I'm amazed.

The apostles didn't believe the women because their story "seemed like nonsense" but Peter ran to the tomb, anyway, to check things out. He found the tomb empty, saw the burial clothes by themselves then "went home amazed." No, he didn't run back full of excitement to tell the others either, he just "went home amazed." I'm really amazed.

The emotion and excitement don't begin to appear in Luke's Gospel until people begin experiencing the risen Lord. That's what does it; the experience of Jesus in their personal lives. You'll notice it during the Easter season Masses when we start retelling the post-resurrection stories of Jesus' appearances.

They're good stories but they may just turn out to be stories to you, simply leaving you amazed. My prayer is that we all go beyond the stories and actually experience the risen Lord in our personal lives too. That makes all the difference.

We should all be asking, "What do I need to do to open myself to experiencing the risen Lord like the early Church did so many years ago?"

May the Lord bless you all with the experience of his presence...

Fr. Ron

Personal Reflection:

But Peter got up and ran to the tomb, bent down, and saw the burial cloths alone; then he went home amazed at what had happened. Lk 24:12

Question:

What words or phrases attracted your attention during the Liturgy of the Word on Sunday? What connection do those words or phrases have to your day-to-day life? (Why do you think they attracted your attention?) What might God be trying to say to you through these words or phrases? What response should you make? What action should you take?

Alternative:

Reflect upon/Share about a person whom you previously knew about who had a profound effect on you when you actually met them. What was so profound about that experience? What is the difference between knowing about them and getting to know them? What would you need to change, in your life, to allow Jesus to have a profound effect on you like that?

Verse by Verse:

Lk 24:1 "...on the first day of the week..." | Raymond Brown in JBC calls this the first day of a new age. This is morning of the day after the Sabbath, what we call Sunday morning.

Lk 24:4a "While they were puzzling over this..." | The empty tomb did not immediately mean to them that the Lord had risen.

Lk 24:4b "...two men in dazzling garments..." | This is how Luke describes angels. Matthew says an angel, John says two angels, and Mark says one young man clothed in white.

Lk 24:5 "...and bowed their faces to the ground..." | They looked down out of fear rather than looking directly at the two men. This does not imply reverence.

Lk 24:5b "...Why do you seek the living one among the dead?" | This seems to be a mild rebuke; they should have known he wouldn't be there.

Lk 24:6b "...Remember what he said to you..." | Refers back to Lk 9:22, and Lk 18:33.

Lk 24:9 "...to the eleven and to all the others." | This suggests more disciples gathered than just the remaining apostles.

Lk 24:10b "...the others who accompanied them..." | More than just the three named women went to the tomb.

Lk 24:10 "...Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary the mother of James" | Matthew records that only Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to the tomb that morning. Mark lists Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Salome. He does not refer to others. In the Gospel of John Mary Magdalene is the only one.

Brown points out "Evidently the Resurrection Narrative was not fixed in the way that the Passion Narrative and the Syn tradition of the life of Jesus was fixed. In addition, there is an allusion in 1 Cor 15:6 to an apparition that has no clear parallel in the Syn or in Jn. That the apostolic Church made no effort to harmonize these divergent and even conflicting accounts is of itself extremely significant; the faith in the resurrection did not depend on the fact that everyone had the same story. Nor should too much be made of the divergence; the resurrection is the most unique and shattering of all the events related in the Gospels, and confusion in the details is rather to be expected (→ Aspects NT Thought, 78:146-159)."

Lk 24:11 "...their story seemed like nonsense and they did not believe..." | Fr. Joseph Fitzmyer SJ, quoting Conzelmann, says that "The significance of 24:11 is that it expresses the truth that the Resurrection cannot be deduced..."

Lk 24:12 "...then he went home amazed..." | This doesn't specify why Peter was amazed or that he drew any particular conclusions from seeing the empty tomb.