

Reflecting

On Sunday's Readings

June—2025

The following series is **free, downloadable small-group materials** based on each week's Mass readings and the seasons of the liturgical year. Each study provides an introductory reflection on some aspect of the readings or on personal spirituality. Each of the readings is provided along with a few questions designed to engage the heart and stimulate the group's discussion. These small-group materials will be provided on a continuing basis in monthly segments.

We would suggest the following 60-to-90 minutes format for the small group:

1. Open with a moment of quiet reflection and prayer.
2. Discuss the introductory reflection with a question or comment like, "What do you feel is important for us to grasp in this introduction?" or "What stood out to you from these opening paragraphs?" As the facilitator of the discussion be ready to share one or two things which were important to you from the introduction.
3. Have someone read the First Reading and ask several people to share their answers to the reflection questions. **Effective group-dynamic techniques should be used to further stimulate the discussion and affirm the participation.** (The booklet *A Facilitator's Guide* is available from Emmaus Journey to provide additional practical training for leading lively and informative small-group discussions.)
4. The Responsorial Psalm provides a reflective transition from the First Reading to the Gospel Reading, so have the Psalm read aloud. You may do this without additional comment, or you may want to draw their attention to something you feel is pertinent.
5. You can either read this week's Second Reading next and ask several people to share their answers to the reflection questions, or cover the Second Reading after you cover the Gospel Reading. The Second Reading does not always have a clear connection to the other Sunday Mass readings, **so do not feel like you need to force a connection.** However, you can provide an opportunity for the Holy Spirit to draw a connection by asking, "How do you see this passage tying into the theme of the readings?"
6. Move on to the Gospel Reading, repeating the process by asking several people to share their answers to the reflection questions.
7. Approximately equal time for discussion should be given to each of the sections: Introduction, First Reading, Gospel Reading, and the Second Reading. Obviously, if one section is especially stimulating, you should give some additional time to discussing it.
8. Close the discussion with group prayer, using various prayer formats.

We trust that God will use these materials to make His Word more meaningful to you, both within the small group environment and during Mass as you hear the Scripture is read and taught. **We would appreciate knowing if you are using the *Reflecting on Sunday's Readings*, and would welcome your feedback, either through the Emmaus Journey web page form, or by direct e-mail.**

Sincerely,

Richard A. Cleveland

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Please note that on Sunday June 2 two options for the readings are available. This is due to the fact that some dioceses celebrate *Ascension of the Lord* on

***Sunday*, and some may instead celebrate *Seventh Sunday of Easter*.**

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THE SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER—June 1, 2025

Introduction: “Can’t we just live together in peace?” is the plaintive cry of a world racked with division. In their futile attempts to secure self-made peace the world exalts and promotes diversity as the key to harmony; let every person do that which is right in their own eyes. However, this freedom is often not sought for, nor granted to Christians, especially Catholic Christians. The motivation behind the exaltation of diversity is ultimately peace through uninterrupted self-gratification and freedom from constraints. Unfortunately, when the world exalts diversity to the point of extending the definition to include perversity, and without submitting to the Creator, disunity, and division result rather than peace.

Jesus shows us a better way in this week’s Gospel Reading. Early in history Christianity demonstrated that diverse people can live together in peace. From the very first Christianity included male and female, Jew and Gentile, slave and free, and people from various nationalities and ethnic groups. This diverse group was tied together by the Spirit of Christ, not by some superficial “I’m okay, you’re okay” philosophical connection. This unity was first demonstrated by the perfect unity which existed between the Father and the Son. Theirs was a unity of love which manifested itself in harmony of purpose and mutual concern for the other’s glory. Jesus suggests in his great priestly prayer (John 17), just prior to his passion, that this unity is desired and available for all who follow him.

It is important though to realize that Jesus was not interested in unity simply for the sake of unity but for God’s glory. The unity of which Jesus speaks hinges on the presence of a glory that is greater than our personal human charisma, and on a purpose that takes us beyond our personal desires. That glory is in fact the indwelling presence of God. This presence not only enables us to be something that we are not, but also enables us to see others through the eyes of Christ who dwells within us. People, ourselves included, no longer simply remain flawed human persons, but rather are the very dwelling place of God, **“I in them, thou in me.”** Consequently, we can, or should, no longer relate to one another on a purely human level but should love and honor one another as we love and honor Christ.

In addition, the unity Jesus speaks of is centered around a purpose that is higher than ourselves; the glory of God and the communication of the Gospel of Peace to a divided world. For diverse people to lay aside their selfish ambitions, which are in fact the things which divide us, there must be a purpose and calling that is esteemed more highly by them than are their personal preferences. Twice in Jesus’ prayer he identifies the purpose around which diverse people can and should unite—**“So that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.”** It is only when people unite around Christ and his eternal purposes that unity among diverse people is possible. That unity which Jesus said is the key to the propagation of the Gospel to the world, hinges on the visible presence of unity among his followers. Diverse people united in love and purpose, and living together in harmony is such a rarity in this world that its very presence is a wakeup call for those without peace, and a visual aid to the reality of Christ. Is it any wonder that the progress of salvation is so slow in our world today?

What should be our response? “As evangelizers, we must offer Christ’s faithful not the image of people divided and separated by unedifying quarrels, but the image of people who are mature in faith and capable of finding a meeting-point beyond the real tensions, thanks to a shared, sincere, and disinterested search for truth. Yes, the destiny of evangelization is certainly bound up with the witness of unity given by the Church. This is a source of responsibility, and also comfort.” (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, by Pope Paul VI, paragraph 77.)

For the texts corresponding to this Sunday's Readings please either consult with your New American Bible, or the USCCB (United States Council of Catholic Bishops) website.

First Reading — Acts 7:55-60

1. In what ways do you see Christ in Stephen's life?
2. How would you describe the effects of a life full of the Holy Spirit?

Responsorial Reading — Psalm 97:1-2, 6-7, 9

Second Reading — Revelation 22:12-14, 16-17, 20

3. What does this passage say about both the motivation and the message of evangelization?

Gospel Reading — John 17:20-26

4. Describe the "The glory which ... I have given to them".
5. How would you explain to another the importance of Jesus' being sent from the Father?
6. If you were to embrace verses 25 and 26 as your "life verses" what effect would it have on how you live?

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THE ASCENSION OF THE LORD SUNDAY—June 1, 2025

Introduction: The Incarnation and the Ascension of the Lord stand out as two giant parentheses around the life of Jesus that proclaim the same message—this person is sent from heaven. Over 45 times in the Gospel of John alone reference is made to this fact that Jesus is sent from God in heaven. If it were not so, people could claim that the Good News was just another religious philosophy devised by a clever man. However, both the Incarnation, with the angel's messages and the miracles surrounding it, and the Ascension, Jesus' visible ascent into the clouds, which was preceded by the resurrection miracles, completely affirm that Jesus is the "Sent One." This conclusive proof was essential for Jesus' disciples in light of the worldwide mission they were to embrace and the worldwide persecution that they were to encounter.

In addition, Jesus' ascension was necessary for the disciples to be able to have Christ's presence with them at all times and for all time. Jesus said, *"Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, The Advocate will not come to you, but if I go, I will send him to you."* The ascension was not the removal of Jesus from the world but the prelude of the coming of the Holy Spirit. It made possible for Jesus' to ever indwell his followers. From Jesus' Ascension and the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the Apostles spoke of "Christ in you," when referring to the life of his followers. (The book of Ephesians wonderfully enlarges on this truth.) It is his indwelling presence that gives us hope as we endeavor to complete the tasks he gives us.

The Holy Spirit, whose presence was made possible by Jesus' ascension, also enables us to accept and accomplish the task of being a witness. In fact, I think it is safe to say that one of the evidences of the Holy Spirit's presence is that we do become witnesses. At least in the passage of Scripture in this week's First Reading that is the implication. Jesus promised that with the Holy Spirit would come "power." Further Jesus says that when this takes place that the disciples "shall be" his witnesses. The implication is that a cause and effect relationship will take place. The Holy Spirit with his accompanying power is the *cause*, and the *effect* is that they would be "witnesses." Should we assume when a person receives the Holy Spirit today that the same cause and effect relationship no longer exists? I don't think so.

The ascension underscores the task of evangelization. If we had been there, we too would have been dumbfounded, standing staring into the sky, with our mouths open in awe. It would have been a phenomenal event to observe. But once it was over these disciples were jolted back to reality by two men, undoubtedly angels, who for all practical purposes said, "Hey, why are you standing around, he is going to come back in the same way he departed, so let's get with it." So, Jesus' ascension provides an imperative for the great commission, to take the Gospel into the world.

A few years ago, there was a lot of interest in reading a series of fictional books based on the return of Christ. But Christ's return is not fiction. Nor is it meant to simply provide entertaining stimulation for our literary enjoyment. Christ's return is as sure as was his ascension. When he returns will we still be staring with open mouths into the sky, or worse yet into an illuminated television screen, or will we be people who are taking the Good News to our world, motivated by his life, death, resurrection, and ascension? By God's grace may it be the latter.

"Because he who was taken up into heaven is both God and a human being, he remains on earth with the saints in the humanity which he took from the earth, but in the divinity with which he fills earth and heaven equally he remains 'all days, even to the consummation of the world.'" — (Bede, from *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Vol II, Mark*, page 243.)

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First Reading — Acts 1:1-11

1. What results from the Holy Spirit's indwelling have you experienced?

Responsorial Reading — Psalm 47:2-3 ,6-9

Second Reading — Ephesians 1:17-23

2. What do you think would happen if for a month you meditated and prayed about the application of these truths to your life?

Gospel Reading — Luke 24:46-53

3. Explain in one simple statement what repentance and forgiveness means.
4. What do you feel is our responsibility for taking this message to the nations?
5. What was the source of the disciple's great joy? Do you think it is available to us today? Why or why not?

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PENTECOST SUNDAY—June 8, 2025

Introduction: God is a God of provision. Just a few examples from Scripture will remind us how important is this truth about God. In creation God provided all that man needed in the Garden of Eden, food, animals, purpose, and even a companion to remove Adam's loneliness and to share in God's calling. When Israel was led from Egypt to the promised-land, God provided guidance by day and by night, and food (manna and quail) and water to sustain them in the desert. Jesus continued to demonstrate that God is the God of provision by supplying wine at the wedding of Cana, feeding the thousands who came to hear him, and by instituting the Eucharist meal. So it is not unreasonable to expect that God would continue to provide for the needs of his people after Jesus' ascension. This provision is the Holy Spirit, and comes through his power.

Unfortunately, most of us view the Holy Spirit as a concept and doctrinal tenet to which we profess belief, rather than an active power and presence in our life, upon which we can rely. Almost without exception the more than 95 references to the Holy Spirit in the New Testament speak of his doing some action for us. He was given to seal, sanctify, comfort, teach, guide, gift, empower, and send us. He is always an active presence. Equally interesting is the fact that our relationship to the Holy Spirit is dependent upon our actions as well. Consequently, we see in the New Testament that we are to receive, believe, be filled with, and yield to the Holy Spirit, and cautioned not to quench, grieve, resist or lie to the Holy Spirit.

He is real and active, and there exists a dynamic interaction between each of us and the Holy Spirit that either enables him to have a growing influence in our life, or that diminishes his influence in our life. And that really is the question we should ask ourselves this Pentecost Sunday, **"Am I more in tune with and yielding to the Holy Spirit's influence in my life today than I was a year ago?"**

Perhaps you're reading this and thinking, "I've really blown it. By my actions and attitudes I have squelched his power and presence in my life." Well cheer up, that is where Christianity triumphs over man-made religion. Through the promise of confession and forgiveness the slate can be wiped clean and you can stand justified before God (just-as if-I'd never sinned). The Holy Spirit does not require anything else to begin the process of filling our life and fashioning it to conform to the image and character of Christ. All we need to do is to exercise those actions mentioned above, believe, receive, yield, and he will fulfill his part to, sanctify, comfort, teach, guide, gift, empower, and send us. Each day through prayer and yielded-ness we can open our life to an ongoing Pentecost experience where his power and presence becomes more real and active in our life.

Origen, accurately speaks of this process of renewal, "The power of God the Father and God the Son is at work in the whole of creation. The saints are those who are fully receiving life in the Holy Spirit. Accordingly, it is said, 'No man can say that Jesus is the Lord except in the Holy Spirit.'

"However unworthy the apostles might have been, they were told: 'You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit is come upon you.' This is what is referred to by the phrase, 'he who has sinned against the Son of Man is worthy of forgiveness.' Even if one at times ceases to live according to this divine word, even if one falls into ignorance or folly, the way is not blocked to true penitence and forgiveness. ..." (From the *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Vol. II, Mark*, page 44)

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First Reading — Acts 2:1-11

1. What responsibility did the disciples have in the process of being “filled with the Holy Spirit”?
2. In what way would you like to experience the empowering of the Holy Spirit in your life?

Responsorial Reading — Psalm 104:1, 24, 29-31, 34

Second Reading — 1 Corinthians 12:3-7, 12-13

3. How are “varieties of gifts,” “varieties of service,” and “varieties of working” similar and/or different?
4. What are God's purposes for having the Holy Spirit give us gifts, services, and workings?

Gospel Reading — John 20:19-23

5. Where are you in your journey of “receiving the Holy Spirit”?
6. Specifically, in this passage what activities are associated with receiving the Holy Spirit?
7. How are these activities fulfilled within the Church, the body of Christ, and within individual Christians?

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HOLY TRINITY SUNDAY—June 15, 2025

Introduction: What a deal! It is better than a buy-one-get-one-free sale. With Christ, when you believe in him, you receive not only him but also the other two persons of the Trinity. What a deal! And the cost is solely born by Jesus, all we need to do is simply believe and receive him, and the Father and the Holy Spirit join him in indwelling our lives.

In the early days of Christianity there was a lot of confusion regarding the definition of the Trinity, however the reality of the Trinity never was in doubt. The term “Trinity” is not specifically used in Scripture so it was necessary for the early church fathers to develop a statement summarizing this reality. During the first couple of centuries of Christianity, as good people endeavored to explain the Trinity, various opposing definitions were put forth. These definitions spanned the gamut of competing and sometimes contradictory beliefs. Finally, at the Council of Nicea (325 AD) the Church affirmed and clarified the doctrine of the Trinity in what we now refer to as the Nicene Creed, which we profess during Mass. The issue was never a question of either the reality or legitimacy of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit but of how they related and the part each played in salvation. We can see this in an early quote by Clement, Bishop of Rome around 100AD: “*Do we not have one God and one Christ and one Spirit of grace, a Spirit that was poured out upon us?*” (From *Catholicism*, by Richard P. McBrien) The early Church experienced the reality of the Trinity’s involvement in their lives.

We too should not simply have a head knowledge of this doctrinal truth but a daily reliance on the Trinity’s presence in our lives. Sacred Scripture tells us of this indwelling:

- “...*I have been crucified with Christ and it is no longer I who live, but it is **Christ who lives in me.***” (Gal. 2:19-20)

- “*Or do you not know that **your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own?***” (1 Corinthians 6:19)

- “***For we are the temple of the living God;** as God said, ‘I will live in them and walk among them, and I will be their God. ...’*” (2 Corinthians 6:16)

The Trinity is a reality that we carry within us as members of his body. The Trinity is with us where ever we go and in whatever we do, and the Trinity is an audience to all of our conversations. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit live in us to quicken or make alive our conscience, to guide and motivate us to make the right decisions and to do the right things, and to give us the power to break the chains of enslaving habits and natural inclinations that are contrary to God.

What a deal!!! We get so much by believing in Jesus Christ and becoming his disciples. St. Ambrose explains it this way, “*My Father and I will come and make our home with him.* Let your door stand open to receive him, unlock your soul to him, offer him a welcome in your mind, and then you will see the riches of simplicity, the treasures of peace, the joy of grace. Throw wide the gate of your heart, stand before the sun of the everlasting light *that shines on every man.* This true light shines on all, but if anyone closes his window he will deprive himself of eternal light. If you shut the door of your mind, you shut out Christ. Though he can enter, he does not want to force his way in rudely, or compel us to admit him against our will. ... “Christ comes to this door and knocks; he knocks at these gates. Open to him; he wants to enter...” (*The Liturgy of the Hours, III*, page 469.)

Let’s open our hearts to Christ and affirm on this Most Holy Trinity Sunday that we will not simply allow the Trinity to be a doctrine we profess, but to become an indwelling relationship we cherish.

For the texts corresponding to this Sunday's Readings please either consult with your New American Bible, or the USCCB (United States Council of Catholic Bishops) website.

First Reading — Proverbs 8:22-31

1. How does this passage reveal more than one aspect of the Trinity?

Responsorial Reading — Psalm 8:4-9

Second Reading — Romans 5:1-5

2. All three persons of the Trinity are mentioned in this passage. How do you see their interaction in our salvation?

Gospel Reading — John 16:12-15

3. How do you see the Trinity revealed, and the three roles clarified through this statement by Jesus?
4. What light does this verse shed on how the early Church Fathers developed an understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity?
5. How can your understanding of the Trinity become more of a real influence in your life

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THE MOST HOLY BODY AND BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST SUNDAY—June 22, 2025

Introduction: The last verse of this week's Gospel Reading says, "*And they took up what was left over, twelve baskets of broken pieces.*" The reference to broken pieces reminds me of an incident that happened during Lent a few years ago. At our parish during Lent, the people responsible for the liturgical decorations strategically placed cracked and broken clay pots among the floral decorations to remind us of our brokenness. A friend's granddaughter, about six years old, was sitting near the front of the church and upon observing the broken pots scattered about, turned to her granddad and said, "Granddad, this place is a mess!" Well sometimes our brokenness certainly is a mess, but it also can be a source of encouragement and hope when people realize that Jesus receives us in our brokenness, and makes us whole again.

Christ's body and blood probably did not appear very attractive either. Sometimes I think we are spoiled by the sophisticated beauty of our gold and silver crucifix jewelry, and are subtly deceived into minimizing the awfulness of the cross. When once visiting Spain we saw many *Santos*, statues used in religious processions, and a lot of Spanish art depicting Jesus' sacrifice. Many of them made us cringe due to their vivid and gory depictions, and rightly so. Christ's death for us was a brutalization of his body and the spilling of his real blood. The rebuffs of the palace guards were not merely verbal affronts, but they rendered real physical blows on his body that bruised and battered our Lord. The crown of thorns fashioned for him to wear was made of real, long, flesh-piercing thorns that provided a crown of pain pushed forcibly into the flesh of his scalp. The nails were real. The next time you are in a hardware store go to the nail bins and pick up and handle some of the spikes. Pick up spikes large enough to pierce through a man's hands and feet, and to go deep enough into the wood to hold the person upright on a piece of tree. Realize that similar spikes, though less slender and sophisticated, were forcefully driven through our Lord's body, pounded again, and again, and again, until the nails were securely imbedded in the log. Imagine the jolt and tearing of the flesh as the cross was raised and dropped into the posthole. It was gory! It should make us cringe.

No matter how unpleasant the scene may be in our minds, or how long the image lingers there, we must be able to envision it to return some semblance of reality to what it cost our Lord to secure our salvation. His was a battered, bruised and bloodied body that hung and died on the cross. The Scripture says in Hebrews 9:22, "*Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.*" So Jesus shed it all. We would do well to devote more time to reflecting on Jesus' sacrifice. Though salvation is free it is not price-less, it cost a heavy price. **Continued meditation on Christ's Holy Body and Blood gives us an accurate understanding of what our salvation cost Jesus. From that understanding comes a proper response of gratitude, devotion, and commitment.** "It was necessary that it be this way. How else could he have borne the totality of the world's sin? He had to bear all that the world did to him, and all the consequences of all the crimes of all time, of which what we did to him is the chief." (from *Death on a Friday Afternoon*, by Fr. R. J. Neuhaus) The little girl's comments could have referred to the world's spiritual and moral condition, "This place is a mess!" It certainly is, and the Holy Body and Blood of Jesus Christ is the remedy for healing and putting the pieces of our lives back together.

For the texts corresponding to this Sunday's Readings please either consult with your New American Bible, or the USCCB (United States Council of Catholic Bishops) website.

First Reading — Genesis 14:18-20

1. How has Christ satisfied your need for being blessed?

Responsorial Reading — Psalm 110:1-4

Second Reading — 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

2. When you receive the body and blood of Christ in Eucharist, what do you think about?
3. What do you think Jesus specifically wanted the disciples to remember? Why?

Gospel Reading — Luke 9:11-17

4. Why do you think Jesus involved the disciples in the feeding of the multitude?
5. What message do the twelve baskets of left over broken pieces of bread and fish signify?
6. What can we do to welcome people to our parish life and encourage them to be nourished by Christ?

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SAINTS PETER AND PAUL, APOSTLES SUNDAY—June 29, 2025

Introduction: The Apostles Peter and Paul exemplify the transforming power of God's love. Both men were zealous to keep the laws of Judaism, and thought it abhorrent to associate with those who were considered spiritually unclean by Israelites. Yet each ended their lives as champions of the Gentiles. What was it that transformed this aversion for the Gentiles into love for the Gentiles? Nothing less than the love of Christ.

For Peter the cycle began while he was following Jesus as a disciple. However, in the Garden of Gethsemane it was obvious when Peter drew his sword and lobbed off the soldier's ear that Peter had only learned in part Jesus' message. Later, not fully comprehending all that was transpiring with Jesus' arrest, Peter in fear denied knowing Jesus or being his follower. We can only imagine the guilt and shame that engulfed him during the crucifixion when he realized the extent of his betrayal. After Jesus' resurrection the extent of this cycle of love was realized by Peter and his life was forever changed. Three times Jesus asked if Peter loved him, and three times affirmed his forgiveness of Peter by saying, "Feed my sheep." Peter was transformed by Jesus' forgiveness and love into the "rock" that Jesus named him.

Saint Paul (previously known as Saul) had a similar yet different encounter with Jesus that instituted a similar cycle of love. Having never believed in Jesus, Paul's denial of Jesus not only took the form of disbelief but also of persecution. His misplaced zeal played havoc on the early Church as Paul persecuted Jesus by persecuting his followers. Paul too had his encounter with Jesus. We can imagine the dismay and fear Paul must have felt when he realized that the resurrected Jesus, the one he was pursuing and persecuting with such vehemence, really did exist. But instead of encountering a vengeful Jesus he encountered a loving and forgiving Jesus. He too became a follower. The extent of Paul's life changing encounter with God's love is best understood when we realize that he who described himself as being a "zealous" Jew, gave the remainder of his life to living among Gentiles, loving them, and taking to them the Good News.

What was it that transformed this aversion for the Gentiles into love for the Gentiles—nothing less than their personal experience of Christ, and his love. Each person's experience is different. Not all of us deny Christ as blatantly as did St. Peter, not all of us have a vision of Jesus as did St. Paul, but we all should have a real experience and awareness of the Father's forgiveness through Christ. The Church tells us and the Holy Spirit urges us to meditate on Jesus' sacrifice and with thanksgiving recall his daily grace and mercy. When we do so, our experience of Christ will also take on a deeper reality. It too will transform our unhealthy aversions for others into redemptive love.

This comment by St. Paul; "For the love of Christ controls us, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. And he died for all, that those who live might live no longer for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised," (2 Corinthians 5:14-15) captures the essence of the lives of these two martyrs. They experienced Christ's love through his forgiveness of their sin and it motivated them to live for Jesus. They became convinced beyond a shadow of a doubt that Jesus did not die for just them but for all people. Consequently, Christ's love for them produced a reciprocal love for him, and for those he loved; the people of the world. And so out of love for Jesus and their fellow man, they began taking his message to a very needy world. This is the process of advancing the Gospel; love begetting love, redemption begetting redemptive living. If we are not experiencing and participating in it we must ask, "Why?"

How can we honor Saints Peter and Paul on this their feast day? We obviously cannot duplicate their experience but we can emulate their example. They allowed Christ's transforming love to make them into new creatures. They allowed Jesus' love to not only enable them to overcome sin and character flaws in their nature but also to motivate them to give their lives as carriers of this love to others. This cycle of love was never meant to be consumed in isolation and halted by inattention, but rather to be reproduced and given away to others as

the seeds of new life. We honor Saints Peter and Paul and emulate their example by keeping the cycle going; by receiving, absorbing, and giving away Jesus' love.

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First Reading — Acts 12:1-11

1. Compare Peter's behavior during the trial of Jesus with his willingness here to suffer imprisonment for the Gospel. What does it tell you about the changes that had taken place in Peter?

Responsorial Reading — Psalms 34:2-9

Second Reading — 2 Timothy 4:6-8, 17-18

2. What principles on life, sacrifice, and ministry can you glean from this statement by Paul?

Gospel Reading — Matthew 16:13-19

3. Jesus made these statements about Peter, prior to Peter's denial, but not oblivious to it. What hope does that give us about transformation?

4. How can we enable others to experience the transforming power of love?

5. People attribute various meaning to the word "rock" in verse 18. Why do we as Catholics believe that this "rock" refers to Peter?

