Reflecting On Sunday's Readings

April 2026

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 that this passage ties 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, Second Reading and the Gospel 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 Scripture 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,

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Reflecting On Sunday's Readings

EASTER SUNDAY—April 5, 2026

Introduction: Easter, when delight was turned to disappointment and disappointment was turned to delight. Surely Satan and the forces of evil must have thought they had won the great battle. If the forces of evil could have danced, surely, they must have been dancing in the streets. They thought they had killed the Son of God.

Darkness seemed to have been reigning supreme from the time when Judas and an armed crowd, came to arrest Jesus under the cloak of darkness. Darkness provided the cover for the evil intentions of those persecuting Jesus but also for the shameful abandonment of Jesus by his disciples. Even Peter had to slink away into the darkness to hide his shame.

How the forces of evil must have rejoiced as "from noon onward there was darkness over the whole land," until at last Jesus "gave up his spirit." How they must have believed that this darkness was just a foretaste of the spiritual darkness which would envelop the earth unabated by the Light of the World. But God had another plan and turned their delight to disappointment.

While darkness still seemed to reign, Mary Magadalene and her companions, and later Peter and John, came "while it was still dark" only to find an empty tomb. Disappointment upon disappointment, or so it seemed at first. But when they realized that the face cloth was separate from the other burial wrappings, a ray of hope and light pierced the darkness, never to be extinguished again. Rather, it was a ray of hope and light which was to grow in brilliance as Christ's resurrection became known and its meaning understood. Praise God, disappointment is now turned to delight!

"The New Testament writers speak as if Christ's achievement in rising from the dead was the first event of its kind in the whole history of the universe. He is the 'first fruits,' the 'pioneer of life.' He has forced open a door that has been locked since the death of the first man. He has met, fought, and beaten the King of Death. Everything is different because He has done so. This is the beginning of the New Creation: a new chapter in cosmic history has opened." [1]

Christ's arrest, suffering, death, burial, and resurrection introduced a new creation, a new life that has not only escaped the bonds of death but also the chains of enslavement to our natural passions and their subsequent evil behavior. With Jesus' resurrection comes power to live differently. Jesus introduces a whole new perspective and purpose to life—life lived in union and communion with the Trinity. This new-creation life is described in Ephesians 5 as walking in the Light because through the Holy Spirit's abiding presence we are able to see life with new insight. In addition, walking in the Light implies a life of holiness is possible, free from the shadows of darkness.

Wherever or whenever you are experiencing darkness of the soul, Jesus is there, a Light shining in darkness just as John said in the beginning of his Gospel. We should no longer shrink into our fears believing the lie that evil will triumph, but follow the disciples' example and seek out the resurrected Christ. He is risen, he is triumphant, we are in him, full recipients of his victory. In Christ, we are a new creation, and can experience living as a new creation in the peace and power of Jesus. Contrary to the disciple in today's Gospel reading, we need not see and believe, but instead we have the opportunity to believe and see.

[1] C.S. Lewis, from *Miracles.*

First Reading — Acts 10:34, 37-43

[34] And Peter opened his mouth and said: "Truly I perceive that God shows no partiality,… [37] the word which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism which John preached: [38] how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. [39] And we are witnesses to all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; [40] but God raised him on the third day and made him manifest; [41] not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. [42] And he commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that he is the one ordained by God to be judge of the living and the dead. [43] To him all the prophets bear witness that every one who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

1. How did God affirm the life and ministry of Jesus, according to this passage?

2. How do you feel about being a witness? How can this passage change your view?

Responsorial Reading — Psalm 118:1-2, 16-17, 22-23

[1] O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his steadfast love endures forever! [2] Let Israel say, "His steadfast love endures forever." …

[16] the right hand of the LORD is exalted, the right hand of the LORD does valiantly!" [17] I shall not die, but I shall live, and recount the deeds of the LORD. …

[22] The stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner. [23] This is the LORD's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.

Second Reading — Colossians 3:1-4

[1] If then you were raised with Christ, seek what is above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. [2] Think of what is above, not of what is on earth. [3] For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. [4] When Christ your life appears, then you too will appear with him in glory.

3. What does "your life is hidden with Christ in God" mean to you?

4. What have you found helpful to enable you to "think of what is above" during your daily life?

Gospel Reading — John 20:1-9

[1] Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. [2] So she ran, and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." [3] Peter then came out with the other disciple, and they went toward the tomb. [4] They both ran, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first; [5] and stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. [6] Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb; he saw the linen cloths lying, [7] and the napkin, which had been on his head, not lying with the linen cloths but rolled up in a place by itself. [8] Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; [9] for as yet they did not know the scripture, that he must rise from the dead.

5. What can we learn from these disciples and their various responses?

6. What is the significance of such detail in reporting the resurrection?

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Reflecting On Sunday's Readings

THE SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER—April 12, 2026

Introduction: *"To bring about in all Catholics such an enthusiasm for their faith that, in living their faith in Jesus, they freely share it with others"* is the first goal of *Go and Make Disciples.*[1] Hopefully your enthusiasm for your faith in Christ is riding high after having focused on his passion, death and resurrection. Now you are faced with the ever-present option, do you keep the fire of Christ burning in your heart or do you let the embers grow cold and ashen like an abandoned fire? Because God is a gracious God, the option is yours.

How can a person maintain enthusiasm for Christ, and the things of Christ? It seems that when we look at the first century Christians, who turned their world upside down with their enthusiasm, several things stand out. We see in the first reading that they were "devoted" to Jesus and to pleasing him. The word "devoted" means to give ourselves over to something, purposefully, and ardently. Lukewarmish-ness wasn't an issue to these early believers because they knew they might be called on to die for their faith. Unlike Thomas, who would only believe when he could see and feel Jesus' wounds, early believers loved Jesus, even though having not physically seen him. And though they did not see, still they believed. Was it easier for them, than for us? No! It still took faith and commitment. And like the early Christians, when we reaffirm our love and faith in Christ, the Holy Spirit will respond to our receptivity, and like a breath from heaven that blows on the embers of our faith, he will reignite our enthusiasm.

Sometimes, in *good* times, it seems easy to be a Christian, but what about the difficult times, the times of trials and testing of which the second reading speaks, and the psalmist during his times of "falling" found that the "Lord helped me." Many of the early Christians experienced very difficult times, even times of persecution, and they found that the Lord's help and strength often came in the form of Christian community and companionship. Consequently, they availed themselves of the opportunities to be with others who were alive with faith. They were devoted to Jesus *in the midst* of community and communion. If we were to take a brilliantly glowing coal from a roaring, hot fire, and set it off by itself, in a short period of time the formerly glowing coal would become ashen and cold. Similarly, when we withdraw ourselves from the warmth and glow of others who are alive in Christ, we will also grow cold in a short period of time. God provides community for us through other believers, and we need this life-giving presence of Jesus' body to maintain our enthusiasm. Accordingly, the rest of Christ's body needs us, for it is in relationship with other believers that both the Living Word and the written Word are more fully made known to us.

"But God has put this Word into the mouth of men in order that it may be communicated to other men. When one person is struck by the Word, he speaks it to others. God has willed that we should seek and find His living Word in the witness of a brother, in the mouth of man. Therefore, the Christian needs another Christian who speaks God's Word to him. He needs him again and again when he becomes uncertain and discouraged, for by himself he cannot help himself without belying the truth. He needs his brother man as a bearer and proclaimer of the divine word of salvation."[2]

The option is yours! What will you do differently this year to keep the fires of your faith enthusiastically aflame?

1 Published by the National Council of Catholic Bishops.

2 Dietrich Bonhoeffer in *Life Together.*

First Reading _ Acts 2:42-47

42 And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

43 And fear came upon every soul; and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. 44 And all who believed were together and had all things in common; 45 and they sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as any had need. 46 And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

1. How can a person who isn't in a religious vocation "devote" themselves to the teachings, communal life, breaking bread, and praying?

2. What do you think attracted others to put their trust in Jesus for salvation, and unite with these early Christians?

Responsorial Psalm _ Ps 118:2-4, 13-15, 22-24

2Let Israel say, "His steadfast love endures forever." 3 Let the house of Aaron say, "His steadfast love endures forever." 4 Let those who fear the LORD say, "His steadfast love endures forever."…

13 I was pushed hard, so that I was falling, but the LORD helped me. 14 The LORD is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation. 15 Hark, glad songs of victory in the tents of the righteous: "The right hand of the LORD does valiantly, …

22 The stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner. 23 This is the LORD's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. 24 This is the day which the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Second Reading _ 1 Peter 1:3-9

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 and to an inheritance which is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, 5 who by God's power are guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 In this you rejoice, though now for a little while you may have to suffer various trials, 7 so that the genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold which though perishable is tested by fire, may redound to praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 8 Without having seen him you love him; though you do not now see him you believe in him and rejoice with unutterable and exalted joy. 9As the outcome of your faith you obtain the salvation of your souls.

3. Salvation is described as being "imperishable, undefiled, and unfading." Explain each of these terms in your own words.

Gospel Reading _ John 20:19-31

19 On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." 20 When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. 21 Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I send you." 22 And 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; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." 24 Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, 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 in his hands the print of the nails, and place my finger in the mark of the nails, and place my hand in his side, I will not believe."

26 Eight days later, his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. The doors were shut, but 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; and put out your hand, and place it in my side; do not be faithless, but believing." 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 believe." 30 Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name.

4. How do you feel when you hear someone express doubt regarding Christ? What do you think causes doubt and fear to arise in our lives?

5. What is Jesus' message for our fears and doubt?

6. What does the phrase "that you *may* come to believe" imply to you?

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Reflecting On Sunday's Readings

THE THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER—April 19, 2026

Introduction: How do you feel when you meet someone for the second time, and they don't recognize you or know who you are? Do you feel somewhat diminished? Do you not wonder whether this relational disconnect is a reflection of your unimportance, their lack of understanding of your value, or is it just a case of bad memory? Jesus also went unrecognized by many, but he was not lessened by their failure to recognize him. In some cases, people like the Israelites Peter spoke to in the first reading, didn't recognize Jesus as being from God, or as being the Messiah and Savior. Others, like the disciples in today's Gospel reading, caught up in their own woundedness, also failed to recognize him as they moved through their daily life.

It is difficult to imagine that the disciples could be in the actual presence of the resurrected Savior, conversing with him, yet unable to recognize him. But is it really so hard to believe? We too are often in the actual presence of Jesus and fail to recognize him. When we are with other believers, in whom Jesus lives, he is there, really there. When we read or hear the Scriptures, he is there, really there. When we unite with others around the Eucharist, Christ is present, really present. Sadly, we often fail to recognize him.

Like the disciples' experience on the road to Emmaus, there is no recognition unless the Lord opens our understanding and reveals himself. It was in the Scriptures and in the breaking of the bread that Jesus revealed himself to the disciples. These are the means he still chooses to show himself to us. We find throughout sacred Scripture pleas such as: "Speak Lord your servant listens." "Grant me understanding, that I may know your testimonies." "Incline my heart to the words of your mouth." Thoughts and prayers similar to these should be the continual response of our heart and lips. It is unfortunate, if we participate in spiritual activities without experiencing the Lord's presence. He is what our life is really all about.

Speaking of the need for the Lord to reveal himself, St. Thomas à Kempis says: "The Prophets can preach the word, but they cannot bestow the Spirit. They speak most eloquently, but if You are silent, they cannot fire the heart. They instruct in the letter, but You open the understanding. They set forth the mysteries, but You reveal the meaning of all secrets. They teach your commandments, but You help us to observe them. They point the way, but You grant us strength to follow it. Their action is external; You instruct and enlighten the heart. They water the seed; You make it fruitful. They proclaim the words, but You impart understanding to the mind Therefore, let not Moses speak to me, but You, O Lord my God, the Everlasting Truth, . . ."[1]

The plaintive words of the disciples, "we had hoped," stand out in sharp contrast to the psalmist's exultation that "because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved." Our spiritual future can be characterized by a hopeless, dull disappointment or by a vibrant experience of fulfillment. God is ever ready to open our eyes through the Scriptures and through the Eucharist, but we must be willing to seek him there. We do that by reading and meditating on sacred Scripture and by seeking his presence in the Eucharist. If we do either with only token commitment, we cannot expect anything other than a token recognition of his presence.

1 *Introduction to the Devout Life.*

First Reading _ Acts 2:14, 22-33

[14] But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them, "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. …

[22] "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs which God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know— [23] this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. [24] But God raised him up, having loosed the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it. [25] For David says concerning him, 'I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken; [26] therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; moreover my flesh will dwell in hope. [27]For thou wilt not abandon my soul to Hades, nor let thy Holy One see corruption.[28]Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou wilt make me full of gladness with thy presence.'

[29] "Brethren, I may say to you confidently of the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. [30] Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants upon his throne, [31] he foresaw and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. [32] This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. [33] Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this which you see and hear.

1. What convincing support does Peter offer to prove Jesus is the Messiah?

Responsorial Psalm _ Psalms 16:1-2, 5, 7-11

[1] Preserve me, O God, for in thee I take refuge. [2] I say to the LORD, "Thou art my Lord; I have no good apart from thee."…

[5] The LORD is my chosen portion and my cup; thou holdest my lot. …

[7] I bless the LORD who gives me counsel; in the night also my heart instructs me. [8] I keep the LORD always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. [9] Therefore my heart is glad, and my soul rejoices; my body also dwells secure. [10] For thou dost not give me up to Sheol, or let thy godly one see the Pit. [11]Thou dost show me the path of life; in thy presence there is fulness of joy, in thy right hand are pleasures for evermore.

Second Reading _ 1 Peter 1:17-21

[17] And if you invoke as Father him who judges each one impartially according to his deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile. [18] You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your fathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, [19] but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. [20] He was destined before the foundation of the world but was made manifest at the end of the times for your sake. [21] Through him you have confidence in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

2. What is the motivation that would empower us to conduct our lives with reverence?

Gospel Reading _ Luke 24:13-35

[13] That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, [14] and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. [15] While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. [16] But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. [17] And he said to them, "What is this conversation which you are holding with each other as you walk?" And they stood still, looking sad. [18] Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?" [19] And he said to them, "What things?" And they said to him, "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, [20] and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. [21] But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since this happened.[22] Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning [23] and did not find his body; and they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive. [24] Some of those who were with us went to the tomb, and found it just as the women had said; but him they did not see." [25] And he said to them, "O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! [26] Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" [27] And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

[28] So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He appeared to be going further, [29] but they constrained him, saying, "Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent." So he went in to stay with them. [30] When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to

them. [31] And their eyes were opened and they recognized him; and he vanished out of their sight. [32] They said to each other, “Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the scriptures?” [33] And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven gathered together and those who were with them, [34] who said, “The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!” [35]Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread.

3. Contrast the psychological make-up of these disciples before and after Jesus revealed himself to them.

4. What are one or two ways in which we can cooperate with Jesus’ desire to reveal himself to us through the sacred Scriptures and the Eucharist?

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Reflecting On Sunday’s Readings

THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER—April 26, 2026

Introduction: *“It is as absurd to argue men, as to torture them, into believing.”* (Cardinal John Newman)

The religious leaders of Jesus’ day made it perfectly clear that a person does not have to believe to be religious. Jesus made it perfectly clear that religion is in vain, even counter to God, if it is not rooted in faith “So they said to him, ‘What can we do to accomplish the works of God?’ Jesus answered and said to them, ‘This is the work of God, that you believe in the one he sent.’” John 6:28, 29

Each of this week’s Sunday Readings involves some aspect of personal faith. Because as Catholics we are often baptized as infants and raised in the Church, we often overlook the need to make our own reasoned faith decision about Jesus and the salvation he offers. Often, we are Christian and Catholic because we were raised that way, not because we exercised our free choice. The Catechism says, “To be human, ‘man’s response to God by faith must be free, and . . . therefore nobody is to be forced to embrace the faith against his will. The act of faith is of its very nature a free act.’” It further points out, “Faith is a personal act – the free response of the human person to the initiative of God who reveals himself.” (160, 166) So the Church teaches that it is important to make this decision to respond to God by faith in Christ. *Go and Make Disciples*[1] points out that “people experience conversion in many ways. Some experience a sudden, shattering insight that brings rapid transformation. Some experience a gradual growth over many years. Others undergo conversion as they take part in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults …” Though the processes may vary the step of personal faith is *crucial*.

The Catechism has a great definition of the concept about which we are speaking; “Believing is an act of the intellect assenting to the divine truth by command of the will moved by grace.” *(155)* A personal faith decision not only understands the truth about Jesus’ death and resurrection but agrees with and responds to grace with an act of the will to consent to believe and follow Jesus. You will discover that this is the choice the people had in today’s first reading. The people, confronted with these truths by Peter, asked one another “what shall we do.” John Paul II provides a wonderful suggestion in the following quote. *“*. . . Please allow me to shout it aloud: ‘It is time to return to God!’ The person who does not yet have the joy of the faith is asked for the courage to seek it with confidence, perseverance, and openness. Whoever has the grace of possessing it is asked to value it as the most treasured possession of his life, living it thoroughly and witnessing to it with passion. Our world hungers for faith, for an authentic and deep faith, because God alone can fully satisfy the desires of the human heart.”

The Gospel reading clearly indicates that personal faith is not the mere assent to doctrinal truths but is a relationship with a loving Shepherd. Consequently, Jesus speaks of the gate of salvation as coming through a person; him; “I am the gate (or door)” and whoever enters, “enters through me.” Because the Father is gracious,

he gives us the opportunity to choose to enter into this relationship with Jesus, or not to. May we find our heart fully satisfied by choosing him.

1 Published by the National Council of Catholic Bishops.
2 From "It is Time to Return to God!" L'Obsservatore Romano as quoted in *The Catholic Church at the End of an Age,* by Ralph Martin.

First Reading _ Acts 2:14, 36-41

[14] But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them, "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. …

[36] Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified."

[37] Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest o0.f the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?" [38] And Peter said to them, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. [39] For the promise is to you and to your children and to all that are far off, every one whom the Lord our God calls to him." [40] And he testified with many other words and exhorted them, saying, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation." [41] So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

1. What is the difference between recognizing Jesus as "Messiah" and acknowledging him as "Lord"?

2. Though Jesus did all that was necessary to ensure our salvation how does Peter explain our personal responsibility?

Responsorial Psalm _ Psalms 23:1-6

[1] The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want; [2] he makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters; [3] he restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. [4] Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.

[5] Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of my enemies; thou anointest my head with oil, my cup overflows. [6] Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

Second Reading _ 1 Peter 2:20-25

[20] For what credit is it, if when you do wrong and are beaten for it you take it patiently? But if when you do right and suffer for it you take it patiently, you have God's approval. [21] For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. [22] He committed no sin; no guile was found on his lips. [23] When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he trusted to him who judges justly. [24] He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. [25] For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.

3. How does this freedom from sin enable us to live righteously?

Gospel Reading _ John 10:1-10

[1] "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber; [2] but he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. [3] To him the gatekeeper opens; the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. [4] When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. [5] A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers." [6] This figure Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

[7] So Jesus again said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. [8] All who came before me are thieves and robbers; but the sheep did not heed them. [9] I am the door; if any one enters by me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. [10] The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

4. From this passage describe the activities of the shepherd.

5. In your own words how would you describe the characteristics of the sheep in this passage?

6. How do you feel about the way these passages speak of the personal aspect of believing?

Scripture text is from the *Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition,* (New York: The National Council of Churches) 1997, c1994.
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