

# *Reflecting* On Sunday's Readings

April 2009

The following series is **free, downloadable small-group materials** based on each week's Mass readings and taking into account 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 minute 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.**
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 in Christ,

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# Reflecting On Sunday's Readings

PALM SUNDAY OF THE LORDS PASSION—April 5, 2009

**Introduction:** In many respects the period from the Last Supper through the Crucifixion, looking at it from the lives of the disciples, could be called “The Story of Good Intentions.” In this week’s Gospel reading there are several examples of people making an initial step to do the right thing, however, in most cases their good intentions are abandoned.

Two people who should be commended for not abandoning their good intentions are the woman from Bethany who anointed Jesus’ head with costly oil in spite of social pressure, and Joseph of Arimathea who sought and prepared Jesus’ body for burial in the face of persecution and opposition. Their love, courage, and devotion to Jesus impelled them to follow through on their good intentions. The characteristics of these two stand out in contrast to the other examples seen in this passage where good intentions were abandoned either because of the weakness of their flesh or the fear of others’ opinions and reactions. For example, Peter, James, and John fully intended to watch with Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane as he prayed and agonized about the coming sacrifice he was to make. But their good intentions went awry as they surrendered to the desires of their flesh for sleep.

We see in these disciples’ lives, images of ourselves. Often our love for Jesus has compelled us to make some commitment of heart, only to discover soon after that our good intentions have been abandoned due to our human weakness, or due to concern about what others think. Fortunately, we also see ourselves occasionally follow through on our good intentions, overcoming weakness and fear with love’s resolve and courage.

Looking at Jesus’ life we can find both a compelling example, and strength to turn more of our good intentions into accomplished deeds. Jesus fully knew what was ahead for him; the betrayal, abandonment, suffering and death, which we know as Christ’s Passion. He had every good intention to follow through and complete the most important act of humanity, and for humanity, the securing of our salvation and release from the chains of sin and death. But it was not without struggle. Humanly speaking, his flesh did not desire what was ahead any more than ours would have. Emotionally, he knew it was his friends and loved ones he would be leaving in death, and that spiritually this would be a battle against Satan and the forces of evil. Not exactly something to anticipate with joy. However, in the face of this struggle he did not abandon his good intention, but in love and courage followed through.

We can learn a valuable lesson from our Savior when we reflect on the agony of Gethsemane. As Jesus prayed he was able to pour out his apprehension and articulate his preference not to have to go through this ordeal. As he did so, Jesus’ willingness, resolve and courage were strengthened, and he was able to arise with perfect calm, set his face like a flint toward the path he was being asked to tread, and follow through on his good intention. That same source of strength is available to us, and we will find it in the same process, going to our knees in prayer to a loving Father for grace and help in time of need. “Gethsemane was the hour in which Jesus’ human heart and mind experienced the ultimate odium of the sin he was to bear as his own before the judging and avenging countenance of God... There Jesus accepted the Father’s will and surrendered his own.”\* Perhaps during this coming Holy Week, when on Good Friday we are asked, “Will you watch with me but one hour?” we will be reminded that it is in union with Christ in prayer that we will find strength to also do the Father’s will, turning our good intentions into reality.

\* Romano Guardini in *The Lord*.

## First Reading — Isaiah 50:4-7

4 The Lord GOD has given me a well-trained tongue, That I might know how to speak to the weary a word that will rouse them. Morning after morning he opens my ear that I may hear; 5 And I have not rebelled, have not turned back. 6 I gave my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who plucked my beard; My face I did not shield from buffets and spitting. 7 The Lord GOD is my help, therefore I am not disgraced; I have set my face like flint, knowing that I shall not be put to shame.

1. What is the relationship between listening daily to the Lord and living confidently as Christ’s disciple?

### **Responsorial Reading — Psalms 22: 8-9, 17-20, 23-24**

8 All who see me mock me; they curl their lips and jeer; they shake their heads at me: 9 "You relied on the LORD-- let him deliver you; if he loves you, let him rescue you."

17 Many dogs surround me; a pack of evildoers closes in on me. So wasted are my hands and feet 18 that I can count all my bones. They stare at me and gloat; 19 they divide my garments among them; for my clothing they cast lots. 20 But you, LORD, do not stay far off; my strength, come quickly to help me.

23 Then I will proclaim your name to the assembly; in the community I will praise you: 24 "You who fear the LORD, give praise! All descendants of Jacob, give honor; show reverence, all descendants of Israel!"

### **Second Reading — Philippians 2:6-11**

... 6 Who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. 7 Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, 8 he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross. 9 Because of this, God greatly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

2. Which characteristic of Jesus would you most desire to have, or to have strengthened in your life?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. What does it mean practically, to bow the knee to Jesus; to confess with the tongue that He is Lord?

### **Gospel Reading — Mark 15:1-39**

1 As soon as morning came, the chief priests with the elders and the scribes, that is, the whole Sanhedrin, held a council. They bound Jesus, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate. 2 Pilate questioned him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" He said to him in reply, "You say so." 3 The chief priests accused him of many things. 4 Again Pilate questioned him, "Have you no answer? See how many things they accuse you of." 5 Jesus gave him no further answer, so that Pilate was amazed.

6 Now on the occasion of the feast he used to release to them one prisoner whom they requested. 7 A man called Barabbas<sup>4</sup> was then in prison along with the rebels who had committed murder in a rebellion. 8 The crowd came forward and began to ask him to do for them as he was accustomed. 9 Pilate answered, "Do you want me to release to you the king of the Jews?" 10 For he knew that it was out of envy that the chief priests had handed him over. 11 But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release Barabbas for them instead. 12 Pilate again said to them in reply, "Then what (do you want) me to do with (the man you call) the king of the Jews?" 13 They shouted again, "Crucify him." 14 Pilate said to them, "Why? What evil has he done?" They only shouted the louder, "Crucify him." 15 So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released Barabbas to them and, after he had Jesus scourged, handed him over to be crucified.

16 The soldiers led him away inside the palace, that is, the praetorium, and assembled the whole cohort. 17 They clothed him in purple and, weaving a crown of thorns, placed it on him. 18 They began to salute him with, "Hail, King of the Jews!" 19 and kept striking his head with a reed and spitting upon him. They knelt before him in homage. 20 And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the purple cloak, dressed him in his own clothes, and led him out to crucify him.

21 They pressed into service a passer-by, Simon, a Cyrenian, who was coming in from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to carry his cross. 22 They brought him to the place of Golgotha (which is translated Place of the Skull). 23 They gave him wine drugged with myrrh, but he did not take it. 24 Then they crucified him and divided his garments by casting lots for them to see what each should take. 25 It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him. 26 The inscription of the charge against him read, "The King of the Jews." 27 With him they crucified two revolutionaries, one on his right and one on his left. 28 "And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "And he was counted among the wicked," " 29 Those passing by reviled him, shaking their heads and saying, "Aha! You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, 30 save yourself by coming down from the cross." 31 Likewise the chief priests, with the scribes, mocked him among themselves and said, "He saved others; he cannot



# Reflecting On Sunday's Readings

EASTER SUNDAY, THE RESURRECTION OF THE LORD—April 12, 2009

**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. And 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 their evil intentions and also for the shameful abandonment of Jesus by his disciples. Even Peter had to slink away into the darkness to hide his shame.

How they 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 rule the earth unabated by the Light of the World. But God had another plan and turned their delight to disappointment.

For the followers of Jesus, for several days, disappointment had reigned supreme. Their leader, their Lord and teacher, the one they loved and left all to follow, had been arrested, brutalized, humiliated, and killed. Their lives were devastated and they were left with only memories and questions. While this darkness still seemed to reign, Mary Magdalene 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. 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 was 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.”\*

Wherever, or whenever you are experiencing darkness of the soul, Jesus is there, just as John said in the beginning of his Gospel, a Light shining in darkness. 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, you are a new creation, and can experience living as a new creation in the peace and power of Jesus. Like the disciple in today’s Gospel reading, we must see and believe.

\*C.S. Lewis, from *Miracles*.

## First Reading — Acts 10:34, 37-43

34 Then Peter proceeded to speak and said, "In truth, I see that God shows no partiality. ...37 what has happened all over Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached, 38 how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the holy Spirit and power. He went about doing good and healing all those oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. 39 We are witnesses of 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 This man God raised (on) the third day and granted that he be visible, 41 not to all the people, but to us, the witnesses chosen by God in advance, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. 42 He commissioned us to preach to the people and testify that he is the one appointed by God as judge of the living and the dead. 43 To him all the prophets bear witness, that everyone who believes in him will receive forgiveness of sins through his name."

1. How do you see darkness manifest in the ordinary existence of the people in your environment?
2. How do you feel about being a witness? What makes it difficult? What makes it easy?

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

1 Give thanks to the LORD, who is good, whose love endures forever. 2 Let the house of Israel say: God's love endures forever.

16 the LORD'S right hand is raised; the LORD'S right hand strikes with power." 17 I shall not die but live and declare the deeds of the LORD.

22 The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. 23 By the LORD has this been done; it is wonderful 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 hid with Christ in God" mean to you?

4. What have you found helpful to enable you to "set your minds on things that are above"?

**Gospel Reading — John 20:1-9**

1 On the first day of the week, Mary of Magdala came to the tomb early in the morning, while it was still dark, and saw the stone removed from the tomb. 2 So she ran and went to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and told them, "They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we don't know where they put him." 3 So Peter and the other disciple went out and came to the tomb. 4 They both ran, but the other disciple ran faster than Peter and arrived at the tomb first; 5 he bent down and saw the burial cloths there, but did not go in. 6 When Simon Peter arrived after him, he went into the tomb and saw the burial cloths there, 7 and the cloth that had covered his head, not with the burial cloths but rolled up in a separate place. 8 Then the other disciple also went in, the one who had arrived at the tomb first, and he saw and believed. 9 For they did not yet understand the scripture that he had to rise from the dead.

5. How do the responses at the tomb provide an analogy of the conversion process?

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

7. Through this incident, what value do you see of living your faith in companionship with other believers?

# Reflecting On Sunday's Readings

THE SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER OR, DIVINE MERCY SUNDAY—March 19, 2009

**Introduction:** Holy Week and the Easter celebration has enabled us to emotionally and spiritually walk with Jesus and the disciples through their spiritual warfare and victory. On Holy Thursday our hearts were alternately warmed and chilled as we entered into Jesus' inauguration of the Eucharist, and heard the warning of his coming betrayal. Our hearts became burdened with heaviness when on Good Friday we recalled Jesus' arrest, abusive trial and crucifixion, even though we knew "the rest of the story". Then in the Easter vigil and during the Easter celebration we were able to exalt in Jesus' resurrection and victory over Satan, the forces of evil, and death. We rejoiced knowing that death is destroyed once and for all and that we have new life through faith in the merits of Jesus.

Sadly, for many, the Easter story ends on Easter morning. Actually, Easter should be just the beginning of a new reality which we should ever experience for the future. What are we celebrating if we are not celebrating entering into a new way of living? How tragic it would have been for the disciples to have participated in this fateful week in Jesus' life and to have walked away unchanged. How tragic it would have been if they simply returned to their homes and picked up their lives where they left off before they met Jesus. The whole message of the Gospel of John is captured in the opening paragraph; "In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." And in the closing chapters of John's Gospel, Jesus' Passion fulfilled this truth uttered at the beginning of his ministry. Would it be possible to really comprehend this truth, celebrate it, and walk away unchanged by it? I think not!

There are three expected changes that are fully recognizable in today's Gospel reading. The first is when Jesus twice said, "Peace be with you." No more should our lives be characterized by fear; fear of death, fear of God's retribution, or fear of powerlessness in our lives to overcome the darkness. As we contemplate the finished work of Christ and entrust ourselves to him, we will see a diminishing of fear and an up-surg-ing of peace filling our being.

A second change should come about as we grasp Jesus' statement, "As the Father has sent me, even so I send you." This commission provides purpose and direction for a lifetime. No more must we wander meaninglessly about trying to discover why we exist, or what our purpose is. The resurrection and this commission provides the ultimate promotion; to be ambassadors of Christ to a world that lives in darkness and from which we have been delivered. We have become carriers of forgiveness to a world experiencing the affects of condemnation.

The third change is captured in John's statement, "that believing you may have life in his name." If we walk away unchanged, only to experience life as do the nonbelievers around us, we are missing out, really missing out. Jesus truly offers us new life, a life with new attitudes, with a new spirit, with new power over sin, with new relationships, both with God and with God's people, a new family. We need not walk away unchanged. We can continue to walk with the disciples emotionally and spiritually for the remainder of our lives. The process for us is the same as it was for them. We need to go to Jesus and ask him to breathe into us new life, then join with his disciples to follow him. "If our life in God is to become vital in our experience, we must be involved in ongoing and repeated transformation. It does not have to be forced, but it does have to be real. God's grace will do most of it, but our cooperation is required."\*

\*Marilyn Gustin in *Living the Liturgy*.

## First Reading — Acts 4:32-35

32 The community of believers was of one heart and mind, and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they had everything in common. 33 With great power the apostles bore witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great favor was accorded them all. 34 There was no needy person among them, for those who owned property or houses would sell them, bring the proceeds of the sale, 35 and put them at the feet of the apostles, and they were distributed to each according to need.

1. What are the evidences that major transformation has taken place within the disciples?

2. How would you respond if you met a group of people like these early believers?

**Responsorial Reading — Psalms 118:2-4, 13-15, 22-24**

2 Let the house of Israel say: God's love endures forever. 3 Let the house of Aaron say, God's love endures forever. 4 Let those who fear the LORD say, God's love endures forever. ...

13 I was hard pressed and falling, but the LORD came to my help. 14 The LORD, my strength and might, came to me as savior. 15 The joyful shout of deliverance is heard in the tents of the victors: "The LORD'S right hand strikes with power; ...

22 The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. 23 By the LORD has this been done; it is wonderful in our eyes. 24 This is the day the LORD has made; let us rejoice in it and be glad.

**Second Reading — 1 John 5:1-6**

1 Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is begotten by God, and everyone who loves the father loves (also) the one begotten by him. 2 In this way we know that we love the children of God when we love God and obey his commandments. 3 For the love of God is this, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome, 4 for whoever is begotten by God conquers the world. And the victory that conquers the world is our faith. 5 Who (indeed) is the victor over the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? 6 This is the one who came through water and blood, Jesus Christ, not by water alone, but by water and blood. The Spirit is the one that testifies, and the Spirit is truth.

3. Why do you agree, or disagree, with the statement, "his commandments are not burdensome"?

**Gospel Reading — John 20:19-31**

19 On the evening of that first day of the week, when the doors were locked, where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be with you." 20 When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. 21 (Jesus) said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." 22 And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the holy Spirit. 23 Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained."

24 Thomas, called Didymus, one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. 25 So the other disciples said to him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger into the nailmarks and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."

26 Now a week later his disciples were again inside and Thomas was with them. Jesus came, although the doors were locked, and stood in their midst and said, "Peace be with you." 27 Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands, and bring your hand and put it into my side, and do not be unbelieving, but believe."

28 Thomas answered and said to him, "My Lord and my God!" 29 Jesus said to him, "Have you come to believe because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed."

30 Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of (his) disciples that are not written in this book. 31 But these are written that you may (come to) believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through this belief you may have life in his name.

4. What is the relationship between the disciples' having been sent, and their forgiving sins?
5. Was Thomas' response commendable or not? How much should we rely on our own validation of truth?
6. Why do you think these other signs were not recorded?
7. What do you think John means by, "you may have life in His name"?

# Reflecting On Sunday's Readings

THE THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER—April 26, 2009

**Introduction:** The wellspring of reconciliation, Christ's sacrifice on the cross and bodily resurrection, is the message of hope that we believers must communicate to the world around us. For through his death on their behalf the world can find release from a life of sin and the guilt and condemnation that comes with it, even for the most righteous non-believer, Jesus' bodily resurrection communicates to them the hope of transformation.

In this week's Gospel passage these dejected and defeated disciples exemplify how this message of hope can set people free and turn their world around and put them on a new road of life. Jesus did not choose some miraculous or exalted means to communicate with them, but rather chose two simple means of communications, means which we can also utilize to communicate this hope. Jesus made himself present to them through friendly and significant conversation around a simple meal. We who know Christ are reminded of the privilege we have of dining with Christ through the Eucharist. In this simple celebration we are able to commune with him, and experience his grace filled fellowship.

But what about the poor non-believer who hasn't yet entered into the fellowship of his Body by putting their faith in Christ? How is the non-believer to share in a simple meal of fellowship with Christ? Only through us. As we make ourselves available to them, Christ who dwells in us, also becomes present to them. It is through our words and actions that Jesus can engage the non-believer in meaningful conversation, communicating the message of salvation and his love and care for them.

It is interesting to note that Jesus was not satisfied that they simply became aware that he was alive and present. In addition Jesus made himself known to them by opening the sacred Scripture to them so that they could understand the significance of his death, and resurrection. Once he had accomplished this, those disciples were prepared in both head and heart to be "witnesses of these things." When believers have allowed both their heart and head to be converted they become enthusiastic about "witnessing to these things."

As we relate to non-believers it is important that we also open the Scripture to them, so that they too can understand the significance of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. We can do this by simply telling them about a passage of Scripture that has been meaningful to us, or a thought based on a passage of Scripture. We can also invite them to read and discuss the Bible with us. It is amazing what the Holy Spirit will do in their life when they allow their mind and heart to be engaged by God's Word.

"The wellspring of reconciliation, John Paul writes, is the cross of Christ. Its vertical beam symbolizes the human need for reconciliation with God, and its horizontal crossbeam represents the need for reconciliation within the human family. Because the Church is the Body of Christ, its 'central task' is 'reconciling people: with God, with themselves, with neighbor, with the whole of creation.' One of the ways the Church lives out that ministry of reconciliation is to remind the world of the reality of sin. For reconciliation is impossible without naming the evil that had caused division and rupture in the first place."<sup>\*</sup>

\* *Witness to Hope: The Biography of Pope John Paul II*, by George Weigel, page 473.

## **First Reading — Acts 3:13-15, 17-19**

13 The God of Abraham, (the God) of Isaac, and (the God) of Jacob, the God of our ancestors, has glorified his servant Jesus whom you handed over and denied in Pilate's presence, when he had decided to release him. 14 You denied the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. 15 The author of life you put to death, but God raised him from the dead; of this we are witnesses.

17 Now I know, brothers, that you acted out of ignorance,<sup>7</sup> just as your leaders did; 18 but God has thus brought to fulfillment what he had announced beforehand through the mouth of all the prophets, that his Messiah would suffer. 19 Repent, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be wiped away,

1. What do John's message in the second reading, and this message of Peter's have in common? How are they different?

2. Why would these messages be perceived as being “hopeful”?

**Responsorial Reading — Psalms 4:2, 4, 7-9**

2 Answer when I call, my saving God. In my troubles, you cleared a way; show me favor; hear my prayer.

4 Know that the LORD works wonders for the faithful; the LORD hears when I call out.

7 Many say, "May we see better times! LORD, show us the light of your face!" Selah 8 But you have given my heart more joy than they have when grain and wine abound. 9 In peace I shall both lie down and sleep, for you alone, LORD, make me secure.

**Second Reading — 1 John 2:1-5**

1 My children, I am writing this to you so that you may not commit sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous one. 2 He is expiation for our sins, and not for our sins only but for those of the whole world. 3 The way we may be sure that we know him is to keep his commandments.

4 Whoever says, "I know him," but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him. 5 But whoever keeps his word, the love of God is truly perfected in him. This is the way we may know that we are in union with him: ...

3. Illustrate the role of an “advocate.”

4. Define “expiation.”

**Gospel Reading — Luke 24:35-48**

35 Then the two recounted what had taken place on the way and how he was made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

36 While they were still speaking about this, he stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be with you."

37 But they were startled and terrified and thought that they were seeing a ghost. 38 Then he said to them, "Why are you troubled? And why do questions arise in your hearts? 39 Look at my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me and see, because a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you can see I have." 40 And as he said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. 41 While they were still incredulous for joy and were amazed, he asked them, "Have you anything here to eat?" 42 They gave him a piece of baked fish; 43 he took it and ate it in front of them.

44 He said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and in the prophets and psalms must be fulfilled." 45 Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures. 46 And he said to them, "Thus it is written that the Messiah would suffer and rise from the dead on the third day 47 and that repentance, for the forgiveness of sins, would be preached in his name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. 48 You are witnesses of these things.

5. Why was (is) it important to know that Jesus' body was real?

6. How can this passage affect your view of the Old Testament?

7. Give an example of a mind not opened to these things.

8. What makes being a “witness to these things” most difficult for you?

## You're invited ...



To share in the ministry of Emmaus Journey. God is opening up many opportunities to help form Catholics in their faith, for which we need your help.

Within the last year we have been in dialog about how to form Catholics in their faith with people from the Philippines, Serbia, Poland and China, and have been invited to each of these countries to train leaders. Two of the Emmaus Journey bible studies; *The Seven Last Words of Christ*, and *Living in the Power of the Holy Spirit* have been translated for use by the Catholic Church in China. And here in the U.S. Emmaus Journey staff are very involved helping parishes establish small group bible studies and Catholic men's fellowships, as well as speaking at several men's conferences and retreats. We are blessed and encouraged by all that God is doing

Emmaus Journey's budget has been relatively small up to this point, and by God's grace we have been able to accomplish a lot with a little, including offering several free resources, such as *Reflecting On Sunday's Readings*, to Catholics around the world. However, opportunities like the above require additional finances. In fact the January issue of *Saints Alive!* was unable to go to press due to budget constraints.

Though you may not realize it, Emmaus Journey has not made a general appeal for financial support since March of 2007—but we must no longer be silent about our financial needs. **Consequently, we ask you to prayerfully consider contributing to our financial support.** As you think and plan where you want to invest your financial support during this coming year I would ask you to consider investing a significant amount in this important ministry with Catholics, perhaps \$50, \$100, \$500, or more. Your contribution can of course can be given over several months time. **What ever you give, God has promised to bless you for your generosity.**

You can give a tax free donation to Emmaus Journey either through our web page by credit card (<http://www.emmausjourney.org/support.html>) , or by sending your check to Emmaus Journey, PO Box 63587, Colorado Springs, CO 80962-3587. You will receive a tax deductible receipt along with our letter of thanks.

Thank you for the opportunity to share this request with you. **We will be praying for wisdom as you endeavor to ascertain what God's will is for your response to this request.**

With gratitude,

*Rich*

Rich Cleveland,  
Director