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# Christ's Victory for Us

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## **Easter Sunday**

Sunday Readings for April 20, 2014 for Cycle A:

Acts 10:34, 37-43; Ps 118; Col 3:1-4 or 1 Cor 5:6-8; Jn 20:1-9

## **CHRIST'S VICTORY FOR US**

*Lawrence E. Frizzell*

The Church has a millennial experience of the human search for meaning in life, and she wisely draws upon ancient Hebrew traditions of consecrating space and time to the service of God. The patterns of annual and weekly rhythms of time are the basis for learning to appreciate God's work in his world more deeply.

Holy Mother Church is conscious that she must celebrate the saving work of her divine Spouse by devoutly recalling it on certain days throughout the course of the year. Every week, on the day which she has called the Lord's day, she keeps the memory of his resurrection. In the supreme solemnity of Easter she also makes an annual commemoration of the resurrection, along with the Lord's blessed passion (Vatican II, *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* #102).

Unfortunately perhaps, the English language retained pre-Christian vocabulary for designating the Passover of Jesus and the Lord's Day. Parents should instruct their children about the specific Christian names of our holy days, as well as the centrality of Christ's birth for our calendar. Some young people surmise that A.D. means "after death."

The high point of the liturgical year is the celebration of the Paschal Mystery of the Lord's suffering, death and resurrection. The Gospel according to John emphasized the unity of this entire series of events that includes the ascension and mission of the Holy Spirit as well. The "hour" of Jesus binds the tragedy of persecution-and-death with the triumph of resurrection-ascension-sending of the Holy Spirit in an inextricable unity, providing the focus for the entire public ministry of Jesus as well (Jn 2:4; 13:1; 17:1; 19:30). A key to understanding this mystery is the exodus from Egypt as the beginning of a divine action that reaches its positive completion in the Covenant at Mount Sinai and the gift of the Land. St. Luke realized that a pedagogy of the riches of Jesus' work can be appreciated best by a progressive meditation on the content of the Jewish feasts of Passover and Weeks (Pentecost). Thus his two-volume narrative (Luke-Acts) describes the movement of Jesus toward Jerusalem as a great pilgrimage (Lk 9:51) in the company of a crowd of well-wishers; from the holy city the Church is guided by the Holy Spirit to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). Peter learned that, after Jesus' death-and-resurrection for the forgiveness of sins, the gifts of the covenant were offered to all humanity. The baptism of Cornelius reminds us that the gift of faith and the sacraments flow from the Paschal Mystery, interpreted by St. Paul using the symbols of unleavened bread and the lamb of the Jewish Passover (1 Cor 5:6-8). As we renew our baptismal promises our faith is activated so that "sincerity and truth" manifest the reality of our imitation of Christ. Purified by the rigors of Lent we can join more fully in Christ's obedient service of the heavenly Father.

The Gospel shows that our faith is grounded in the witness of the first disciples. The teachings of Jesus had seemed to them enigmatic, at times difficult to accept (Jn 6:60-69). His words "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up" (2:19) were remembered eventually and "they came to believe the Scripture and the word Jesus had spoken" (2:22). We imitate their response of faith by prayerful assimilation of God's Word in the light of the Paschal Mystery, experienced each Sunday through the celebration of God's gifts in the liturgy. Especially in our response of faith to the proclamation of the Last Supper narrative, at the consecration of the bread and wine, we recognize that each Sunday is a "little Easter" in our life of faith. Receiving Jesus as God's gift of nourishment, we are challenged to show our faith in his resurrection by our manner of life.