

Homily for Monday in the Second Week of Easter

April 20, 2020

By the Reverend Stephen Gerth

ACTS 4: 23–31; PSALM 2:8–13; JOHN 3: 1–8

Sometimes I have two copies of the same book because I've lost track of my first copy—and very annoying when it reappears. There are a very few books I have chosen to have two copies of because I want one copy by my desk in my study on the third floor of the rectory on 47th Street and one copy on my desk in my office on the third floor of the Parish House on 46th Street.

Among them are Massey Shepherd's commentary on the 1928 Prayer Book, Marion Hatchett's commentary on the 1979 Prayer Book, and a book that came out in English while I was in seminary, Adolf Adam's *The Liturgical Year: its history and its meaning after the reform of the liturgy*.¹ Over time I have become aware of its limitations,² but it's still useful for a great deal of basic information about what shaped the 1969 Lectionary for Mass of the Roman Catholic Church.

Our weekday lectionary is essentially that of the Roman Catholic Church. It was first adopted among

¹ Adolf Adam, *The Liturgical Year: Its History & Its Meaning After the Reform of the Liturgy*, trans. Matthew O'Connell (New York: Pueblo Publishing Company, 1981).

² Review. John F. Baldwin, *Worship*, 56, no 2, March 1982, 179–81.

Anglicans by the Church of England in for its *The Alternative Service Book 1980*.³ Most days of the year our readings will be the same.

Semi-continuous readings for the weekdays of Easter from Acts began on Easter Monday. During Easter Week the gospel lessons came from the post resurrection narratives of all four gospels. Today we begin a series of semi-continuous readings from the Gospel according to John. Lessons from these two books continue at weekday Eucharists until Pentecost.

On Wednesday in Easter Week, in the lesson from Acts, Peter and John are in the temple to pray. A man lame from birth, a beggar, asked them for money. Peter said to him, “I have no silver and gold, but I give you what I have; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.”⁴ On Thursday the narrative continued with Peter preaching to the people in the temple. On Friday, they were arrested. On Saturday, they are threatened not to preach again. But the authorities “let them go, finding no way to punish

³ R.C.D. Jasper and Paul F. Bradshaw, *A Companion to the Alternative Service Book* (London: SPCK, 1986), 311.

⁴ Acts 3:6.

them, because of the people; for all men praised God for what had happened.”⁵

Peter and John go, in the words of the Revised Standard Version, to “friends” and share what has happened to them. They respond with, what Raymond Brown called, “a triumphal prayer of praise to God.”⁶ Today’s lesson concludes with the Spirit falling on Peter and John and their “friends.”

Luke Timothy Johnson suggests that a better translation of the Greek here, literally, “to their own,” is their “associates”—because of the logic of the narrative.⁷ For Luke, the Holy Spirit is showing that the apostles have the power and authority of God to proclaim the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Just a few words about the gospel. Before this year, I don’t think I ever thought about the journey Nicodemus makes from seeking the light,⁸ Jesus, in the darkness of night, to one who defends him before his fellow leaders,⁹ to the one who helps Joseph of

⁵ Acts 4:21.

⁶ Introduction 291.

⁷ Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, Sacra Pagina (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1991), 83, n. 23, 89–90.

⁸ John 3:1–21.

⁹ John 7:50–51.

Arimathea bury Jesus body, anointed as a king.¹⁰ It's not unlike the journey of any of us who have come to an adult faith step by step in the course of our lives.

✠ In the Name of the Father, and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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¹⁰ John 19:38–42.