

Monday in Easter Week

April 5, 2021

By the Reverend Stephen Gerth

Acts 2:14, 22b–32; Psalm 16:8–11; Psalm 118:24; Psalm 118:24; Matthew 28:9–15

I know that I am not the only person in the parish who is physically tired from the work and worship of Holy Week and Easter Day. Before climbing out of bed this morning, I found myself trying to imagine what shape Jesus' disciples were in as the day after the day resurrection dawned.

But when I got to my desk, I remembered that I am never happy with the lessons appointed for Monday in Easter Week. In preparation for the 1979 Prayer Book, the Standing Liturgical Commission proposed, with almost no changes, the Roman Catholic Church's choices for this week.¹ From an ecumenical perspective, there is something important here. That said, I think the pre-Vatican II lessons appointed for Monday in Easter Week in earlier Prayer Books and the former Roman Missal were better choices.²

¹ *Lectionary for Mass*, 2nd Typical ed., USCCB (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2002), III:299–320.

² *The Book of Common Prayer* (1979), 894, 905, 915–16; https://www.catholic-resources.org/Lectionary/Roman_Missal.htm, (accessed 6 April 2021).

The controlling lesson was Luke's account of two of the disciples' encounter with the Risen Lord on the evening of the day of resurrection on the road to Emmaus.³ The first lesson was not today's selection, Peter's speech on Pentecost.⁴ Instead, it was the speech he gives after the Spirit reveals to him that he will be sought out by Cornelius the Roman Centurion.⁵

Arriving at Joppa, Peter's testimony will include these words, "Truly I perceive that God shows no partiality, but in every nation any one who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him . . . And we are witnesses to all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem . . . but God raised him on the third day . . . to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead"⁶—picking up on the breaking of bread with Jesus by the two disciples who thought they were on their way to another place. Of course, they turned around that night and returned to Jerusalem.

³ Luke 24:13–35. *The Book of Common Prayer* (1928), 166–68.

⁴ Acts 2:14, 22b–32.

⁵ Acts 10:34–43.

⁶ Acts 10:34–41.

I am not a fan of leaving out any of the New Testament over the course of the year—but I think when we come to anti-Judaism in the New Testament, we should be mindful of it. The problematic longer ending of Mark is appointed for Saturday this week. It is canonical—no argument from me. I would return the Story of the Disciples on the Road to Emmaus to Monday and reserve the last three days of this week for the longer ending of Mark, the gospel we heard today from Matthew, and the longer ending of John. I like the idea of keeping our focus today on Christ being recognized by his disciples in the breaking of the bread.

I am glad we are here at this Table today to share in the Gifts of the Risen Son of God.

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

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