

EASTER GRACE

Daily Gospel Reflections



by the Daughters of St. Paul

How to Use This Book



Alleluia! Christ is risen!

Easter is the most important celebration in the life of the Church. It's so important that the Easter season lasts fifty days, and every Sunday of the year is a renewed celebration of the resurrection.

The Gospel readings during the Easter season are taken mainly from the Gospel of John, according to a tradition that goes back to the first centuries of the Church. With this book, you are invited to share with members of the Daughters of St. Paul a prolonged meditation on the deep joy of Easter.

These pages are based on *Lectio Divina* (holy reading), which is a way of praying with Scripture. Our founder, Blessed James Alberione, urged us to nourish ourselves with the Scriptures. He said that when we do this, we “experience interiorly the kindling of a divine fire.” Many methods of *Lectio Divina* have developed since the time of early monasticism. Here, the sisters use a simple framework that allows the word of God to make room in our minds and hearts.

The first step, *Lectio* (reading), is to read the day's Gospel passage from a missal or Bible. Read it a few times slowly, perhaps especially noticing the phrase or verse that is listed under the *Meditatio* section.

Next, the *Meditatio* (meditation) expands the meaning of this phrase and explores what it is saying to us today—what God is asking of us, or challenging us to, or offering to us. After reading the meditation, take as much time as you like to reflect on it.

The *Oratio* (prayer) can help you talk to God about what has arisen in your heart, so that the time of prayer becomes a conversation, not just a time to think. God has spoken in the Scripture. We hear the invitation in our meditation, but now a response is called for. Our response is not just to say, “Yes, I want to do as you are asking me,” but also to declare, “Help me do it, Lord!”

The short phrase under *Contemplatio* (contemplation) is a way of extending this time of prayer into life. You can silently repeat it throughout the day to help deepen the intimacy with the Lord that you experienced in prayer.

Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!

Liturgical Calendar



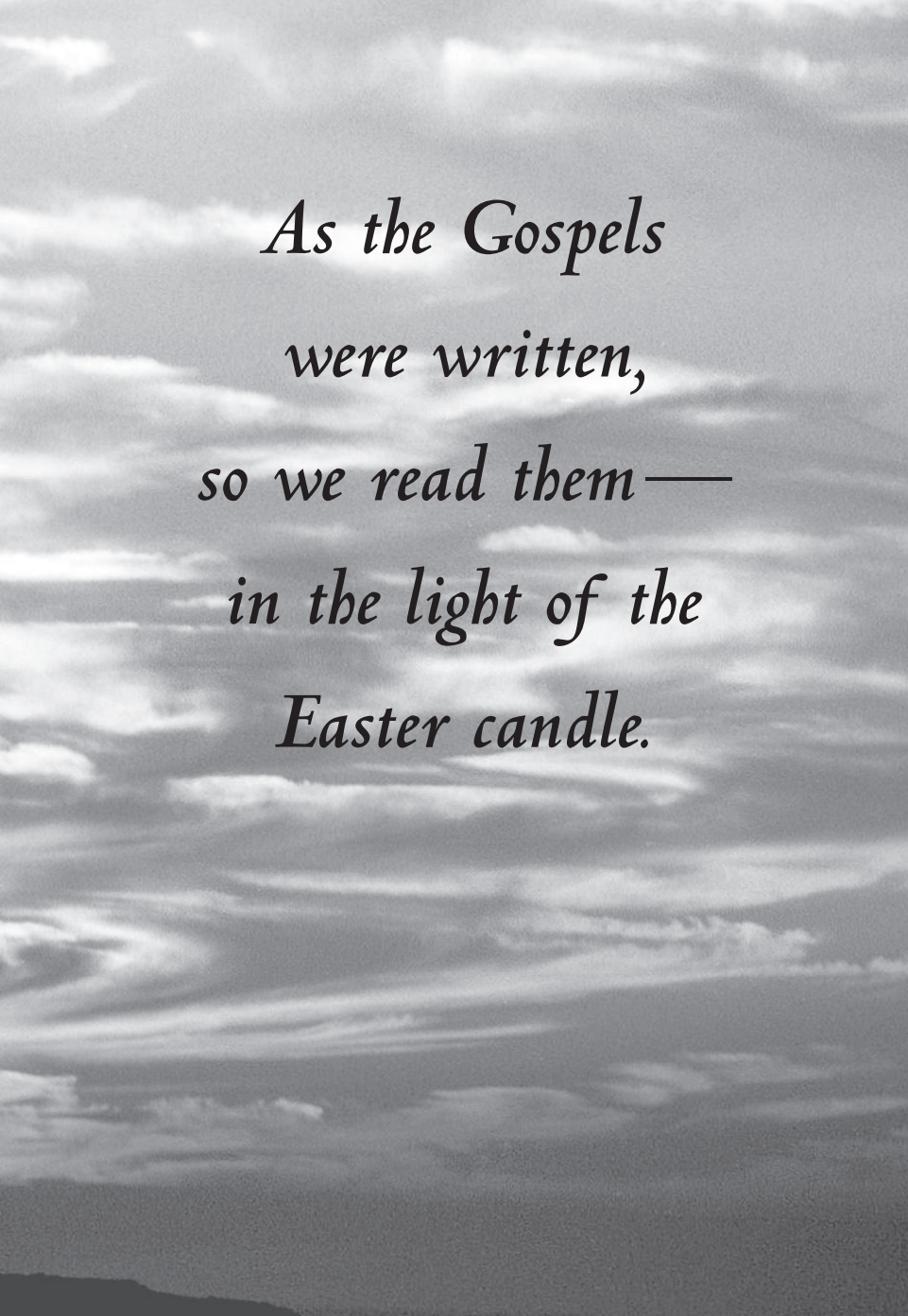
Note to the reader: The Easter season encompasses the seven weeks from Easter Sunday to Pentecost. Meditations for the Easter Triduum can be found in *Lenten Grace*.

Most dioceses celebrate the feast of the Ascension of the Lord in place of the Seventh Sunday of Easter. In some places it is still celebrated forty days after Easter, on the Thursday of the sixth week after Easter. Meditations are provided for both situations.

The Sunday readings follow a three-year cycle (A, B, or C) as indicated in the following chart:

YEAR	CYCLE
2011	Cycle A
2012	Cycle B
2013	Cycle C
2014	Cycle A
2015	Cycle B
2016	Cycle C
2017	Cycle A
2018	Cycle B
2019	Cycle C
2020	Cycle A
2021	Cycle B
2022	Cycle C





*As the Gospels
were written,
so we read them—
in the light of the
Easter candle.*

Easter Sunday



Lectio

John 20:1–9

Meditatio

“ . . . she ran . . . ”

Mary Magdalene hastens to the tomb in the darkness before dawn. She cannot remain alone; she cannot hold back her longing to be near her beloved; she cannot wait for dawn. Mary is the model for all of us who must rouse our love in the sleepy hours of the night, when we feel cold, alone, perhaps abandoned by God, who seems to have failed us and all our dreams. She leads us by the hand, urging us to rouse our love and seek for God when he seems to have died and left us behind.

This Gospel passage is full of love’s running haste. Mary runs to Peter and John, fearing that after Jesus’ death she may have lost his body also, the last remaining physical connection to him. Peter and John run to the tomb.

What is Peter thinking? Is he pondering the burden of leadership now that Jesus has died, wondering how to handle it? Or does he faintly hope that his Master, who had claimed he was God’s Son, will surprise them in a wonderful way?

John runs faster. Is it only because he is younger? Or does he—the disciple whom Jesus loved, the only apostle who

kept vigil on Calvary as Jesus hung dying on the cross—does he keep love burning in his heart? Does he hold onto a love that can see beyond the dark days and hope in God's power to raise from the dead? John is the first one who sees the burial cloths and believes.

Mary, Peter, and John teach us to run in hope, in love, and in belief. We need to run first, even in the dark, to search for the Lord, to commit our hearts to love, and then we will witness the Living Christ in our midst. The resurrection means that Jesus lives—here, now, forever—and has taken us to live as his brothers and sisters, sons and daughters of the Father, for all eternity.

Oratio

Lord, my Love, may I seek you in haste in the darkest days of my life. May my heart thrill at the empty tombs in my life where I discover the power of your strength and see the weight of your glory. O Risen One, may I know you alive in my life, in the world, in the Church, in the Eucharist, at the right hand of the Father. Amen.

Contemplatio

I will awake the dawn.

Monday of the Octave of Easter



Lectio

Matthew 28:8–15

Meditatio

“Say, ‘his disciples came by night and stole him.’”

The religious authorities didn’t know what to make of Jesus’ disappearance, and wanted to squelch any rumors at the outset. So they came up with a tale about theft. People would buy it, they thought.

And people *did* buy it. The story was still circulating when Matthew’s Gospel reached its final edit, several decades later. A deep gulf had been dredged between people who passionately believed in the resurrection of Jesus and others who emphatically did not. Our world today is both similar to that world and different from it. The gulf is present, but seldom mentioned. There is little evidence of passionate belief.

Why does the somber season of Lent come so naturally, while the joyous season of Easter seems so challenging? By way of an answer, how often do we think of Easter, once the feast itself has passed?

In some cultures, people used to (and may still do) greet one another during the Easter season with these words:

“Christ has risen!”

“He has risen indeed!”

This beautiful greeting was a reminder of the great mystery they had just celebrated. We can carry these words in our hearts and, after greeting others in our usual way, repeat them in the depths of our soul. May they echo within us throughout the day! In remembering and reflecting on the overwhelming love that God has shown us through Jesus' death and resurrection, we can become—as Saint Augustine expressed it—*alleluias from head to foot*.

Christ has risen—he has risen indeed!

Oratio

Lord Jesus, I believe! But rekindle my enthusiasm. Don't let the skepticism of our secular culture cloud my belief or dampen my joy. You are the Faithful One, living and true. You are the Way, the Truth, and the Life. You are the Resurrection and the Life. You are the Savior of the world. Increase my Easter joy. Let the overwhelming reality of your resurrection illumine my path, guiding me through the obscurity of earthly life to the brightness of eternity.

Contemplatio

I want to *really live* this Easter season!