

## Lectionary Guide for Acts 2:14a, 36-41 and Luke 24:13-35

### Acts 2:14a, 36-41

The Evangelist Luke (and his community) show Peter speaking to the eleven disciples about witnessing to Jesus Christ. Peter begins by asserting that they should all tell the people of Israel that Jesus, who was crucified, *is* the Lord and Messiah. He must have been convincing because we are told they were “cut to the heart.” They asked what they should do.

Peter told them that they should repent so that their sins would be forgiven. They should be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ so that their sins are forgiven and they will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This is a promise to them; for them, their offspring and those far away who are called to Him. Luke ends, saying that Peter thereby baptized those who welcomed his message. Three thousand they were.

### Ten Questions

1. Peter and the disciples have been through a lot in a short time. Still in grief, fragmented from each other, and trying to make sense of what happened, they are gathered by one of their own, who is emerging as their *de facto* leader. Even Matthew had reported that Jesus had said, *Peter, upon this rock, I will build my church.* (16:18) What does it mean to witness to Jesus Christ? Have you ever done this? How?
2. To Peter, was Jesus an ordinary citizen, a Temple-goer, teacher (rabbi), reformer, religious zealot, political rabble-rouser, Lord and/or Messiah? Are these differences important?
3. Have you ever heard a talk, lecture or sermon in which we felt that we were “cut to the heart”? Try to recall it, describe it and its main message.
4. After hearing Peter, the disciples asked, “*What should we do?*” After hearing a talk, speech or sermon, have we ever asked what we should do? How have we acted on our questions?
5. Peter told them they should repent. What does it mean to repent? Why did he ask them to do this?
6. Peter added that they should be baptized. What does it mean to be baptized? Why did he ask them to do this? To some the Book of Acts is known as “the Book of the Holy Spirit” as the Spirit is poured out on believers over and over again. (2:4) Do

we recall our Baptisms...when, where and who was involved? What has Baptism meant in how we live our lives?

7. The word, *promise*, is used. What is a promise? Recall a promise that we made with someone...when and where...under which circumstances...was it easy to keep...did it last?

8. In Acts, Peter suggests that the promise of Baptism is for the disciples, their progeny and others who are called to Christ. With these words, do we understand why Baptism became a Sacrament in the Church that set people apart but was also offered to any who felt called to be included.

9. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century there was a controversy among the congregational churches as to whether Baptism and church membership were only for those who professed a belief in Christ, or also for their progeny (who might not have made a public confession of personal faith), Do we understand these nuances? How are they important to us today?

10. Acts says matter-of-factly that Peter and the Apostles baptized many that day and “3000 persons were added.” How might we be able to reach beyond our membership to share the Good News?

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### **Luke 24:13-35**

The appearance of Jesus on the road to Emmaus is unique to Luke. It bridges his story of the disciples not knowing what to do after finding the empty tomb -- with this one in a room in which two of the disciples break bread with Jesus then return to tell the eleven others. Before their arrival in Emmaus, seven miles from Jerusalem, Cleopas and another disciple are joined by Jesus, and unknowingly recount to him the events that surrounded his condemnation, crucifixion and resurrection.

When they reached the village, the two invited him to stay over. So, he did, sat at table with the two, blessed their bread, broke it, and shared it with them. Luke says, with this “breaking of the bread” they recognized Christ! But he vanished from them. That same hour, they returned to the eleven in Jerusalem, and recounted what happened on the road and how He was made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

## Ten Questions

1. Jesus' appearance to Cleopas and the other on the road to Emmaus conveyed a sense of dramatic mystery and surprise. It also provided the occasion for Luke, through Cleopas, to sum up from his point-of-view what happened at the time of the Crucifixion. How accurate do you feel this summary was? Why might the evangelist have mentioned "the women at the tomb"?
2. Have we ever been "on the road" to an unknown or familiar place? Traditional examples would include the Medieval pilgrimage routes from Canterbury, England, to Santiago de Compostela, Spain. We may have also experienced our own personal time of being "on the road". Being footloose, strangers might join us on the journey, things might happen (the parable of the Good Samaritan), or the road might lead to shelter, a special place or a holy site. What may be some of our feelings during the journey?
3. Luke says, "they stood still, looking sad." (v. 17b) Why were they sad? Had they had earlier opportunities to express their grief? When we suffer a deep loss, what are some of the contours of our sadness...is it once and for all...how does it express itself over time? Have we ever experienced this sadness turning into acceptance, gratitude and joy? (C.S. Lewis, Surprised by Joy) If so, how did that happen for us?
4. Jesus said, "How slow of heart [you are] to believe." (v. 25a) Apparently, Luke liked to use the image of the heart in writing—*cut to the heart* (Acts 2:37); *slow of heart*; *Were not our hearts burning within us...?* (32a) Why do we think Luke wrote like this at that time?
5. Why might Luke say that Jesus interpreted to the two disciples things about Himself beginning with Moses and the prophets? (v. 27) Is historical continuity important—to the evangelists and to us?
6. Since Easter we have been told by different evangelists that Jesus appeared to the disciples in the garden, in the locked room, and at the table in the breaking of bread. What do we make of these appearances? After someone has died, have we ever "seen" or experienced some sign of the person again...in the flesh...in a dream...at a memorial service...through memory?
7. To some of the evangelists, seeing is believing. Notice Luke says that after the breaking of bread, *[the two disciples'] eyes were opened* (v. 31); in other words, they understood Jesus to be the Christ, not just an apparition. Have we every had a "come-

to-Jesus moment” when we *saw* and *believed*? Describe it. If we have instead been formed in faith more gradually, how did that unfold for us?

8. Luke says that upon returning to Jerusalem, the two disciples told the others “*what happened on the road, and how [Christ] had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.*” (v. 35) Note that it does not say, He was known to them in the bread (pita, rye, whole wheat), but in the *breaking* of bread (breaking the whole into pieces to share with others). What does it mean for us to break bread together? These days how can we make up for missing this act with family and church friends?

9. Regrettably, because of our global health crisis, we will *not* be able to celebrate Holy Communion together as we usually do on the first Sunday of the month. Keeping in mind what is important and, perhaps, not so important, how might we as a congregation break bread together at a distance? (If we have a good idea, can we contact our Interim Pastor soon?)

10. In Acts, we hear about Baptism and in the Lucan Gospel about Communion. The question in Acts was, [*Brothers and Sisters*], *what should we do*? Might it be that Luke is trying to introduce us to what was emerging in the Early Church as two Sacraments, which bring us closer to the Risen Christ? Today do we feel that Baptism and Holy Communion renew our deepening faith?

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