

**COLLECT, READINGS AND REFLECTION**  
**SUNDAY 1 MAY 2022- 3<sup>rd</sup> of Easter**

**COLLECT**

Almighty Father,  
who in your great mercy gladdened the disciples with the sight of the risen Lord:  
give us such knowledge of his presence with us,  
that we may be strengthened and sustained by his risen life  
and serve you continually in righteousness and truth;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

**Psalm 30**

- 1 I will exalt you, O Lord,  
because you have raised me up ♦  
and have not let my foes triumph over me.
- 2 O Lord my God, I cried out to you ♦  
and you have healed me.
- 3 You brought me up, O Lord, from the dead; ♦  
you restored me to life from among those that go down to the Pit.
- 4 Sing to the Lord, you servants of his; ♦  
give thanks to his holy name.
- 5 For his wrath endures but the twinkling of an eye,  
his favour for a lifetime. ♦  
Heaviness may endure for a night,  
but joy comes in the morning.
- 6 In my prosperity I said,  
'I shall never be moved. ♦  
You, Lord, of your goodness,  
have made my hill so strong.'
- 7 Then you hid your face from me ♦  
and I was utterly dismayed.
- 8 To you, O Lord, I cried; ♦  
to the Lord I made my supplication:
- 9 'What profit is there in my blood,  
if I go down to the Pit? ♦  
Will the dust praise you or declare your faithfulness?
- 10 'Hear, O Lord, and have mercy upon me; ♦  
O Lord, be my helper.'
- 11 You have turned my mourning into dancing; ♦  
you have put off my sackcloth and girded me with gladness;
- 12 Therefore my heart sings to you without ceasing; ♦  
O Lord my God, I will give you thanks for ever.

## **Acts 9: 1-6**

### **The Conversion of Saul**

**9** Meanwhile Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest <sup>2</sup> and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any who belonged to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. <sup>3</sup> Now as he was going along and approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. <sup>4</sup> He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?' <sup>5</sup> He asked, 'Who are you, Lord?' The reply came, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. <sup>6</sup> But get up and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.'

## John 21: 1-19

### Jesus Appears to Seven Disciples

**21** After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias; and he showed himself in this way. <sup>2</sup> Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin,<sup>[a]</sup> Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples. <sup>3</sup> Simon Peter said to them, 'I am going fishing.' They said to him, 'We will go with you.' They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

<sup>4</sup> Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. <sup>5</sup> Jesus said to them, 'Children, you have no fish, have you?' They answered him, 'No.' <sup>6</sup> He said to them, 'Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some.' So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish. <sup>7</sup> That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, 'It is the Lord!' When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on some clothes, for he was naked, and jumped into the lake. <sup>8</sup> But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, only about a hundred yards<sup>[b]</sup> off.

<sup>9</sup> When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. <sup>10</sup> Jesus said to them, 'Bring some of the fish that you have just caught.' <sup>11</sup> So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred and fifty-three of them; and though there were so many, the net was not torn. <sup>12</sup> Jesus said to them, 'Come and have breakfast.' Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, 'Who are you?' because they knew it was the Lord. <sup>13</sup> Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. <sup>14</sup> This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

### Jesus and Peter

<sup>15</sup> When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?' He said to him, 'Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed my lambs.' <sup>16</sup> A second time he said to him, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' He said to him, 'Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Tend my sheep.' <sup>17</sup> He said to him the third time, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, 'Do you love me?' And he said to him, 'Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed my sheep. <sup>18</sup> Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go.' <sup>19</sup> (He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, 'Follow me.'

## ***A Reflection from Hannah...***

The conversion of Paul, the beginnings of which we read about in Acts this week, felt like a huge challenge when the invasion of Ukraine first began. The words 'meanwhile Paul was still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord' are full of malice and evil intent. They remind us of the worst of human folly- writ large in many parts of the world today. And yet, when we think of St Paul, we are most likely to recall his deep (sometimes very complex!) commitment to being an apostle to the Gentiles- expounding and explaining our beliefs. But here, in Acts, we remember that he was, for many years, an enemy of Christians, determined to destroy this fledgling faith.

And when we remember that, we recognise the power of God to transform and turn lives around. That power is also there in the Gospel- in the beautiful and intimate encounter between Jesus and Peter, where there is deep reconciliation after the pain of denial. On Good Friday, Peter had pretended he didn't know his closest friend, and yet the risen Christ forgives him- more than that, transforms him. Having gone back to fishing (unsuccessfully!), possibly because they were the ways he knew and felt familiar amidst the strangeness of the resurrection; Peter discovered the company of Jesus, but in a way that would leave him changed forever... and no longer a fisherman!

So how does all that relate to the horrors in Ukraine? Well, these past few months have thrown up questions; not least about our Christian identity and the desperation of our prayers. Many proponents of the violence and destruction call themselves Christians, and yet, as President Zelenskyy noted on the Orthodox Easter Day, we recognise none of the Gospel in their actions. He said this:

'Yesterday, Christians of the Eastern rite celebrated Easter. The traditional greeting "Christ is risen!" sounded also in Russia. But did these words mean the same thing as in the whole Orthodox world?

Russia "congratulated" Ukraine on Easter with an air threat almost all over our country, a missile strike at the Poltava region, and a missile strike at Kremenchuk. Why was this attack needed at Easter? There is no military threat from which this could protect Russia. This is just a deliberate destruction of life in Ukraine. Destruction that did not stop even on the greatest Orthodox holiday.

The Russian army has made this Easter red not only formally in the calendar, but also red with blood. Christians would not do that if they had the opportunity to make peace. So holding a candle in the temple does not mean being a Christian. Eating or even celebrating Easter every year is not enough to be human, to be a Christian.'

The conversion of Paul was a mighty act of God that brought transformation to one life, which still reverberates in our lives today. The reconciliation of Peter did the same. This Easter season, only one week old in the Orthodox Church, may we dare to pray for what might feel impossible- the transformation of hearts and minds that will turn greed, destruction, ego and murder into mercy, justice and peace. Amen.