

MONDAY
19 JULY

Exodus 14:5-18
Psalm 136:1-4. 10-15
or *Canticle:*
Exodus 15:1-6
Matthew 12:38-42

TUESDAY
20 JULY

Exodus 14:21 – 15:1
Psalm 105:37-44
or *Canticle:*
Exodus 15:8-10.
12. 17
Matthew 12:46-end

WEDNESDAY
21 JULY

Exodus 16:1-5. 9-15
Psalm 78:17-31
Matthew 13:1-9

THURSDAY
22 JULY

Mary Magdalene
Song of Solomon
3:1-4
Psalm 42:1-10
2 Corinthians 5:14-17
John 20:1-2. 11-18

FRIDAY
23 JULY

Exodus 20:1-17
Psalm 19:7-11
Matthew 13:18-23

SATURDAY
24 JULY

Exodus 24:3-8
Psalm 50:1-6. 14-15
Matthew 13:24-30

REFLECTION

In this week's Gospel readings

people's response

to Jesus

is often

flawed. Religious leaders demand

a sign from Christ, unconvinced by all the incredible miracles he has performed. The parable of the sower teaches that even those who respond positively to Christ do not always follow him for long before becoming distracted by the pressures of life.

We all let Christ down. Yet, our Gospel readings also show that God is merciful. The parable of the wheat shows God reluctant to rush to judgement. Mary Magdalene, too, reflects God's mercy. She is privileged to be first to see the risen Christ even though she'd failed to remember what Jesus had said about rising from the dead and her initial reaction to finding his body missing is that it must have been stolen.

The parable of the sower also speaks of God's grace. It is God who takes our faith and brings from it abundant growth, yielding fruit thirty, sixty, even a hundredfold greater than that with which we began. As Christ taught elsewhere, just like a mustard seed, our faith may only be small but from that unpromising beginning God can bring great things.

PRAYER

Dear Lord, thank you that you work through us despite our weaknesses, helping our faith to grow and enabling us to bear fruit for you. Help us to be encouraged by your mercy, spurred on by knowing you are at work in us, despite our flaws.



THE EUCHARIST

PART I – BIBLICAL TIMES TO THE EARLY CHURCH

In a new series Richard Greatrex looks at the history of the Eucharist.

When Jesus celebrated the Last Supper on Maundy Thursday, the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) tell us it was the annual Passover meal. John's Gospel has a different symbolic focus, suggesting that Jesus' death occurs on the day the Passover lambs were sacrificed, placing this communal meal a day earlier. Either way, Passover provides a key context for the Eucharist. While both are meals centred upon a redemptive experience, when God saves a community, they are much more than mere remembrance. Transcending re-enactment of an historical moment they, in some indefinable, mystical way, become the event itself. Time and space are broken open: we are in the Hebrew people's Egyptian homes, dressed ready for exodus, Jesus blesses and shares his last meal with us. God's salvific action is ongoing, effective in the past, present and future.

If the Eucharist were simply modelled on Passover, then it would most likely have become no more than an annual event. But all Jewish meals are religious occasions, with ritual actions of cleansing and special prayers, found at their most intense during the weekly sabbath meal, when bread is broken and shared before blessed wine is distributed. Out of this environment early Christian celebrations of the Last Supper were born, overlaid by Jesus' new interpretation of broken bread as his body, wine his blood. He invited those present to eat, to drink in perpetual remembrance of him.

Initially Eucharist in early Christianity was a full, communal meal, eaten on the evening of the first day of the week, growing out of familiar Jewish customs but focused upon remembrance of Jesus (1 Corinthians 11:23-26). Meeting in homes, everyone contributed; but gradually, as more Gentiles became Christians, so the reliance on Jewish practice decreased. By the second century it was no longer a complete evening meal but a synagogue-style morning act of worship, with scripture-based liturgies, prayers and a kiss of peace before the presiding bishop took bread and wine and gave thanks on behalf of everyone present.

Richard Greatrex is a parish priest, freelance writer and author of Stations of the Resurrection (RP Books product code: 1841 ISBN: 9780852315453, £12.95).

LIVE
the WORDSUSTAINING YOU
THROUGH THE WEEK

Edited by
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and
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Seventh week
after Trinity

Monday 19 July to
Saturday 24 July
2021

WEEK