



## FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

### FIRST READING: Acts 7:55-60

A reading from Acts.

<sup>55</sup>Filled with the Holy Spirit,

“Stephen” gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.

<sup>56</sup>“Look,” he said, “I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!”

<sup>57</sup>But they covered their ears, and with a loud shout all rushed together against him.

<sup>58</sup>Then they dragged him out of the city and began to stone him, and the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul.

<sup>59</sup>While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.”

<sup>60</sup>Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.”

When he had said this, he died.

Word of God, word of life.            *or*            The word of the Lord.

### PSALMODY: Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16

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#### FIRST READING

The story of Stephen, traditionally understood to be the first martyr of the church, is simple and straightforward. It has a quiet strength about it and need not be overdramatized by the reader. His quiet confidence in the power of God, even in the face of death (“I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!”), is of the essence. Stephen’s prayers, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them” and “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit,” echo the words of Jesus on the cross and anticipate the psalm appointed for this Sunday, “Into your hands I commit my spirit” (31:5). Be certain to pause after “the glory of God” in verse 55. It is not “the glory of God and Jesus” he saw, but (1) the glory of God and (2) Jesus standing at the right hand of God.

## SECOND READING: 1 Peter 2:2-10

A reading from First Peter.

<sup>2</sup>Like newborn infants, long for the pure, spiritual milk,  
so that by it you may grow into salvation—  
<sup>3</sup>if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

<sup>4</sup>Come to him, a living stone,  
though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight,  
and <sup>5</sup>like living stones let yourselves be built into a spiritual house,  
to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God  
through Jesus Christ.

<sup>6</sup>For it stands in scripture:

“See, I am laying in Zion a stone,  
a cornerstone chosen and precious,  
and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”

<sup>7</sup>This honor, then, is for you who believe,  
but for those who do not believe,

“The stone that the builders rejected  
has become the very head of the corner,”

<sup>8</sup>and

“A stone that makes them stumble  
and a rock that makes them fall.”

They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

<sup>9</sup>But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood,  
a holy nation, God's own people,  
in order that you may proclaim the excellence  
of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

<sup>10</sup>Once you were not a people,  
but now you are God's people;  
once you had not received mercy,  
but now you have received mercy.

Word of God, word of life.            or            The word of the Lord.

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### SECOND READING

This reading is a bit complicated because the author refers both to Jesus and to us as “living stones.” Nowhere is that more evident than in verses 4 and 5: “Come to him [Jesus], a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and [you] like living stones let yourselves be built into a spiritual house.” The text contains a boatload of commas. Make good use of each and every one. The text itself is a wonderful declaration of what it means to be a baptized person. Share that joy with the hearers!

## GOSPEL: John 14:1-14

The holy gospel according to John.

「Jesus said to the disciples:」

<sup>1</sup>“Do not let your hearts be troubled.

Believe in God; believe also in me.

<sup>2</sup>In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places.

If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?

<sup>3</sup>And if I go and prepare a place for you,

I will come again and will take you to myself,

so that where I am, there you may be also.

<sup>4</sup>And you know the way to the place where I am going.”

<sup>5</sup>Thomas said to him,

“Lord, we do not know where you are going.

How can we know the way?”

<sup>6</sup>Jesus said to him, “I am the way and the truth and the life.

No one comes to the Father except through me.

<sup>7</sup>If you know me, you will know my Father also.

From now on you do know him and have seen him.”

<sup>8</sup>Philip said to him,

“Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.”

<sup>9</sup>Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you all this time, Philip,  
and you still do not know me?

Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.

How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’?

<sup>10</sup>Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?

The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own,

but the Father who dwells in me does his works.

<sup>11</sup>Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me,

but if you do not, then believe because of the works themselves.

<sup>12</sup>“Very truly, I tell you,

the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and,

in fact, will do greater works than these,

because I am going to the Father.

<sup>13</sup>I will do whatever you ask in my name,

so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

<sup>14</sup>If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.”

The gospel of the Lord.

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### GOSPEL

A well-rehearsed reading might contrast a deep affection in our Lord’s voice (verses 1-7) with something akin to frustration (if not some irritation) in verses 9-11. A deep breath might precede the concluding verses, 12-14.