



Child Abuse Prevention Month

LITURGY GUIDE

April 26, 2009: Third Sunday of Easter (B)

Acts 3:13–15, 17–19 ✕ 1 John 2:1–5a ✕ Luke 24:35–48

- In the First reading, Peter addresses the crowd gathered at Solomon’s Portico and speaks of Jesus as “the author of life.” Peter acknowledges that those who put Christ to death acted out of ignorance. He calls his hearers to “repent and be converted,” and promises forgiveness (“that your sins may be wiped away”). As the faithful accept Christ, they come to fuller knowledge of his ways by listening to the Word and modeling their lives on the example of his life.
- In the second reading, St. John writes about the real motivation for authentic Christian living: the perfection of God’s love in us. Our fidelity to the Word of God is a demonstration of our acceptance of his love, given freely as a gift. At the same time, because Christ is expiation for our sins, we know that there is forgiveness when we fail to keep his commandments.
- In the Gospel reading, Jesus appears to the gathered disciples and greets them, “Peace be with you.” What does that greeting really mean? His greeting is a bestowal of the grace of the Resurrection: peace. The Risen Lord appears to them in a moment of grief, as they thought he was dead. His greeting brings hope. There is also in this greeting a challenge to be peacemakers, to bear the compassionate and loving presence of Christ, which includes care for the vulnerable and weak. To be a peacemaker is to cultivate and provide an environment of peace— a safe environment— for all we meet.
- Because of the intrinsic value of human life and the dignity of the human person that is given as gift at birth; we are required to protect that dignity. Abuse of all kinds is harmful to the human dignity. Children being the most vulnerable require us to protect them from abuse. We can do that by first training all adults of our parishes that are around children and next by training children how they can protect themselves.
- During his visit to the United States in April, 2008, Pope Benedict XVI addressed the Bishops of the United States gathered at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. During his address he spoke of the problem of the sexual abuse of minors, and reminded the bishops, and the whole Church, of the responsibility entrusted to us:

Among the countersigns to the Gospel of life found in America and elsewhere is one that causes deep shame: the sexual abuse of minors. Many of you have spoken to me of the enormous pain that your communities have suffered when clerics have betrayed their priestly obligations and duties by such gravely immoral behavior. As you strive to eliminate this evil wherever it occurs, you may be assured of the prayerful support of God’s people throughout the world. Rightly, you attach priority to showing

compassion and care to the victims. It is your God-given responsibility as pastors to bind up the wounds caused by every breach of trust, to foster healing, to promote reconciliation and to reach out with loving concern to those so seriously wronged.

[I]t is vitally important that the vulnerable always be shielded from those who would cause harm. In this regard, your efforts to heal and protect are bearing great fruit not only for those directly under your pastoral care, but for all of society.

Truly caring about young people and the future of our civilization means recognizing our responsibility to promote and live by the authentic moral values which alone enable the human person to flourish.

- During Child Abuse Prevention Month, we are reminded of the call to be instruments of peace and healing for those who have suffered as victims of abuse. Peter's call to repentance speaks to people of the world today as a recommitment to protect those entrusted to our care, especially the young, the weak, and the vulnerable. Christ's Easter greeting, "Peace be with you" is another reminder that his gift of peace is not only for us but a gift to be shared through us. Child Abuse Prevention Month should lead to heightened awareness of the need to be vigilant about providing a safe environment for all within the Church and for the world.

Sample Intercessions:

One or more of these intentions may be used as part of the intercessions at Masses throughout the week.

For the Church and its leaders, especially our Holy Father, the bishops, and all entrusted with the care of the Lord's flock, to follow the example of Christ, who appeared to the disciples with a greeting of peace, we pray to the Lord...

For civic leaders entrusted with upholding the common good and justice for all, to act with compassion as they protect the most vulnerable from all harm, we pray to the Lord...

For parents, mentors, teachers, coaches, and all who work with young people, to act and serve with love, following the Lord's commands, we pray to the Lord...

For families to live in peace, providing safe and nurturing environments for their children, we pray to the Lord...

For those who have suffered as victims of abuse, to find hope and healing in the Risen Lord's gift of peace, we pray to the Lord...

For those who provide help for the abused: counselors, therapists, and advocates, to act with wisdom and compassion in their ministry of healing, we pray to the Lord...

For those who have abused, to seek and find repentance, to work for healing, and to live in God's love, we pray to the Lord...

For young people and for all who are discerning God's will in their lives, to trust in God's grace to accept the call to serve in the priesthood or consecrated life, we pray to the Lord...