

## **EASTER: A TIME TO REJOICE**

**Seventh Sunday of Easter**

**May 4, 2008**

**Acts 1:6-14**

**Psalm 68:1-10, 32-35**

**1 Peter 4:12-14; 5:6-11**

**John 17:1-11**

### **Blessed Assurance**

“God cares for you, so turn all your worries over to him” (1 Peter 5:7, *CEV*). What comforting words – words that often come to mind whenever I gather with colleagues to intercede on behalf of persons who ask us to lift them up in prayer. In the midst of adversity and uncertainty, we are assured that God cares for us, that we can cast all our anxieties on him, and that God hears “and answers the prayers of all who obey him” (Proverbs 15:29, *CEV*).

Written to Christians scattered throughout Asia Minor in the first century A.D., the letter of 1 Peter acknowledges that the community of believers may face suffering for their faith in Christ Jesus. But the writer reminds his readers/listeners that such suffering will not defeat them. God is in control (5:11), and following a time of suffering, God promises the faithful that they will be restored and will be made “complete, steady, strong, and firm” (5:10, *CEV*).

1 Peter 5:10 was a verse that brought much comfort to me in the days following the death of my father. When his suffering ended and the Lord called him home, I pictured my father as one who had been restored and made strong. His body, frail from his illness, was now “beautiful and strong” (1 Corinthians 15:43, *CEV*). That the Holy One has chosen us “to share in his eternal glory” (1 Peter 5:10, *CEV*) is a promise that fills us with hope.

This week’s Gospel reading from John is a portion of Jesus’ final prayer prior to his arrest, trial, and crucifixion. In this prayer, Jesus entrusts his followers to God’s care, praying on their behalf (17:9) and asking God to “keep them safe by the power of the name” that God the Father has given him (17:11, *CEV*). His prayer was not only for his beloved disciples, but it is for us today as well. Jesus prayed for all who would come to believe because of the witness and testimony of his early followers (17:20).

Jesus has entrusted us to God’s loving care. Jesus, our great high priest, “understands every weakness of ours, because he was tempted in every way that we are.” And so we are to “come bravely before the throne of our merciful God. There we will be treated with undeserved grace, and we will find help” (Hebrews 4:15,16, *CEV*).

After Jesus' ascension into heaven, "the apostles often met together and prayed with a single purpose in mind" (Acts 1:14a, *CEV*). An inspiring example for us to follow today -- meeting regularly with members of a community of faith to pray, to come before God's throne of grace, to cast our burdens at the feet of our loving and merciful God, and to experience the peace that Jesus promises (John 14:27). Yes, God cares for you! Turn all your worries over to him. This is blessed assurance indeed!

This week's Reflection was prepared by Barbara Bernstengel, who serves on the staff of the American Bible Society as Director of the Education Unit in the Nida Institute for Biblical Scholarship.

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**This week we remember to pray for the work of the Bible Societies in: Bulgaria** – With thanks to God for the successful launch of the new Children's Bible and for its widespread distribution, and also for the interest of children in orphanages in the Bible and in children's biblical literature, and with prayers for Bible work among non-churchgoers and young people; **Romania** – With thanks to God for the success with the interconfessional New Testament translation project, and with prayers that the experience will be helpful with the Old Testament translation, and with prayers for God's guidance in working in prisons, homes for the elderly, orphanages, and rehabilitation centers.

**Activity Corner:** "Care Prayer" Cards

Supplies needed: Bible; construction paper (assorted colors); pens/pencils; crayons; markers; glitter and/or stickers (optional); scissors; glue/paste.

Read together Psalm 68:4-6a. Invite members of your household to make cards for people in your family, church, and/or community who are in need of a word of encouragement. Fold a sheet of construction paper in half (either vertically or horizontally) and decorate the cards by drawing pictures, adding glitter or stickers, or cutting out flowers and other springtime symbols and pasting them onto the card. Ask everyone to write their own message of encouragement on the inside and to include a favorite Bible verse.