

## EASTER: IN FAITH WE CELEBRATE NEW LIFE IN CHRIST

**Seventh Sunday of Easter**

**May 20, 2007**

**Acts 16:16-34**

**Psalm 97**

**Revelation 22:12-14, 16-17, 20-21**

**John 17:20-26**

### **You're invited ... Come!**

Yes, we'll gather at the river,  
the beautiful, the beautiful river;  
gather with the saints at the river  
that flows by the throne of God.  
(Robert Lowry, 1826-1899)

“The angel showed me a river that was crystal clear, and its waters gave life. The river came from the throne where God and the Lamb were seated” (Revelation 22:1, *CEV*). Just as the opening chapters in Genesis speak of the waters of creation (1:1-10) and the river that feeds the garden in Eden (2:10-14), the concluding chapter of Revelation begins with this beautiful description of life-giving water. And in this week's lesson, we read, “If you are thirsty, come! If you want life-giving water, come and take it. It's free!” (Revelation 22:17c, *CEV*).

The inviting word, “come,” appears several times in verse 17. Both the Spirit and the bride extend the invitation. We are invited into a relationship with God – a relationship that is life-giving and that offers us salvation. The invitation comes to us without a price, and harkens back to the words of the prophet Isaiah: “If you are thirsty, come and drink water! If you don't have any money, come, eat what you want!” (55:1, *CEV*).

Because the invitation is offered without price, this life-giving water is available to everyone who thirsts. It is life-giving water that feeds the soul. It is the same life-giving water that the Samaritan woman discovered in her encounter with Jesus, the water “that gives eternal life” (John 4:14, *CEV*). It is that soul-satisfying water for which the psalmist craves:

I truly am thirsty for you, my God.  
In my heart, I am thirsty for you, the living God.  
(Psalm 42:1b, 2, *CEV*)

By means of God's nurturing word and the life-giving water of salvation, God sustains us. By means of the “bride” (the church on earth), God gathers us into community. And,

in this week's Gospel text, Jesus prays for unity among the believers (John 17:21) so that "the people of this world" will know of God's love. As the faithful who have been gathered to share our unity in Christ Jesus, we are called to invite others into the community of believers and to live out Jesus' prayer that all "may become completely one" (John 17:23, *CEV*). Everyone who hears this should say, "Come!" (Revelation 22:17b, *CEV*).

"Come and eat!" Jesus told his disciples in his third post-resurrection appearance to them along the shore of Lake Tiberias (John 21:12). As twenty-first century followers of Christ, Jesus continues to invite us to partake of the banquet he has prepared. By means of his sacrificial death, he has paid the price for our salvation.

Come! Let us "gather with the saints at the river" and drink the life-giving water Jesus offers.

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: Bolivia –**

With prayers that the government's reforms may be effective and that indigenous people and the poor get the care they need, that freedom continue to be enjoyed by all and that God guide the leaders as they draw up a new political constitution, and with prayers for the Bible Society's ability to continue promoting biblical values by distributing God's Word to the whole country without restriction; **Uruguay** – With thanks to God for the distribution of New Testaments in underprivileged areas as part of the bicentennial celebration, and with prayers for "Children's Day," "Go On Sowing," and "New Horizons," (programs that take God's Word to all parts of the country); **Paraguay** -- With prayers for wisdom for the politicians at national, regional, and international levels, and with prayers for the resources to reach out to street children and that their hearts be opened to God's powerful Word.

**Activity Corner:** "Life-Giving Water" Poster

Supplies needed: Bible; writing paper; pens or pencils; poster board; marker; magazines; glue or paste; scissors; pitcher of water; glasses/cups.

Across the top of a poster board, write the words, LIFE-GIVING WATER. Invite members of your household to look through magazines for pictures of water. Cut out the pictures and mount them on the poster board. Then invite everyone to list all the uses of water. Discuss the ways in which water is essential to sustain life.

Read together Psalm 23:1-3; Psalm 42:1-2; Isaiah 55:1-5; John 4:7-15; Revelation 22:1-2, 17. Talk about how water is used in each of these passages. Discuss what it means to receive God's "life-giving water." Invite everyone to write a prayer, thanking God for the gift of water and for offering everyone "life-giving water." Conclude by drinking a

cool glass of water and then singing “Shall We Gather at the River,” or “I’ve Got Peace Like a River,” or one of your favorite hymns.