

You Shall Be My Witnesses

Acts of the Apostles, Chapter 1

What We Found

Luke told us his Gospel was only what Jesus *began* to do and teach, which means Acts is what Jesus continues to do and teach through His Church. The risen Christ is still the main character of this book.

We discovered that the Ascension is not a departure but an enthronement. Like Elisha watching Elijah taken up (2 Kings 2), the disciples watch their Master ascend so that His Spirit can descend on them. And the Church has long read Daniel 7 as the same moment seen from heaven's side: the Son of Man arriving on the clouds to receive an everlasting kingdom. Jesus did not leave the story. He took the throne.

We found Mary in the upper room (Acts 1:14), her final named appearance in Scripture, in the same posture she held when the story began: open to the Holy Spirit and consenting in faith. At the Annunciation she said yes and the Spirit overshadowed her; here she prays with the Church as that same Spirit is promised again. She was there when Christ's physical body was conceived, and she is there as His Body the Church is about to be born.

And we watched the praying Church make her first recorded decision: fill an office. Peter read the Psalms as the Church's script, "His office let another take" (Acts 1:20), and Matthias was enrolled with the Eleven. From its first chapter, apostleship is an office that outlives the man who holds it, which is the seed of what the Church calls apostolic succession.

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Leo the Great, Sermon 74 on the Ascension (5th century)

St. Leo preached that our Redeemer's visible presence has passed over into the sacraments. What the disciples once saw and touched in Christ, the Church now touches in her mysteries. The Ascension is not a loss of presence but a change in how He is present, so that faith might be nobler and stronger than sight.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. John Chrysostom, Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles, Homily 3 (4th century)

St. John Chrysostom notices that Peter acts first among the brethren because the care of the flock was entrusted to him, yet he does nothing alone: he grounds the decision in Scripture and involves the whole community in prayer. Primacy and communion, together, from the Church's first week.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Irenaeus of Lyons, Against Heresies, Book III, 3.1 (2nd century)

St. Irenaeus wrote that the apostles publicly handed on their teaching and their churches to successors, so that anyone can trace the line of bishops from the apostles to his own day. Succession, for Irenaeus, is not a theory but a public, checkable fact.

Live It This Week

The nine days between the Ascension and Pentecost were the Church's first novena: nine days of prayer, with Mary, begging for the Holy Spirit. This week, make it yours. Commit to nine consecutive days of one short prayer, morning or evening: "Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love." Put it somewhere you will see it. If you miss a day, do not restart; just continue. And once this week, at Mass, watch for the moment the priest speaks and acts in the person of Christ, and remember that an unbroken chain of hands stretches from that altar back to the upper room.

Memory Verse

"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

Before Next Session

Read Acts 2, the whole chapter, once. Do not study it. Just read it and notice what surprises you.

Catechism References

CCC 659-664 (the Ascension) · CCC 857-862 (the Church is apostolic) · CCC 965 (Mary and the beginnings of the Church)

MY GUESS, SEALED UNTIL SESSION 14

Acts is a story, and every story ends somewhere. Before you know anything else, write your guess: **where** do you think this story will end, and **how**? A city? A person? A triumph, a trial, a death? Write it below, fold this section over, and do not change it. We will open our guesses together near the end of the study.

My guess:
