

I Have Many People in This City

Acts of the Apostles, Chapters 18 and 19

What We Found

In Corinth, a frightened apostle working his tentmaker's trade at a bench received a night word with a staggering claim inside it: "Do not be afraid... for I have many people in this city" (18:9-10), God speaking of people not yet converted as already His own, a promise most readers hear as heaven counting the harvest to come, the same divine arithmetic that answered Elijah's despair with seven thousand hidden faithful (1 Kings 19:18). Paul stayed eighteen months on the strength of heaven's arithmetic. Every discouraged evangelist, parent, and catechist should carry that sentence.

We watched the Church's quality control work perfectly on Apollos: eloquent, mighty in the Scriptures, and incomplete, he was taken aside privately by Priscilla and Aquila, lay tentmakers, the wife named first, and "expounded the way of God more accurately" (18:26), emerging a champion. The greatness of correcting privately and charitably, and the greater greatness of being correctable.

At Ephesus, disciples who knew only John's baptism were baptized into the Lord Jesus, after which Paul laid hands on them and the Spirit came (19:1-7): preparation is not possession, and sincerity is not sacrament. Then God did extraordinary miracles through handkerchiefs from Paul's body (19:11-12), and we traced the pedigree: a dead man revived at the touch of Elisha's bones (2 Kings 13:21), the garment of Christ (Mark 5:27-30), Peter's shadow (Acts 5:15-16). The God who took flesh is unembarrassed to work through matter, which is the whole logic of the Church's sacramentals and relics (CCC 1667-1670, 1674), while the sons of Sceva, wielding the holy name as an incantation without faith or communion, marked the counterfeit the Church herself condemns as superstition (CCC 2111). "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?" the holy name is not a formula, and the difference between relationship and recitation is one even the demons can tell. And the converts burned fifty thousand silver pieces of their own magic books: real conversion has a price tag, and the word of the Lord grew and prevailed mightily.

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Jerome, *Against Vigilantius* (AD 406)

We do not worship relics, St. Jerome answered for the whole Church; we honor the relics of the martyrs in order to adore Him whose martyrs they are, honoring the servants so that the honor may flow to the Lord. The distinction between veneration and worship, the Church has never lost.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Augustine of Hippo, *The City of God*, Book 22 (5th century)

St. Augustine catalogued miracles he could verify in his own diocese, many wrought at the shrine of the relics of St. Stephen, healings documented with names and witnesses. The God who healed through handkerchiefs from Paul was still healing through the bones of Stephen in Africa, and the Church kept records.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. John Chrysostom, *Homily on the words, Salute Priscilla and Aquila* (4th century)

Chrysostom marvels that tentmakers instructed the eloquent Apollos, and that Paul names Priscilla first. Their workshop was a church and their marriage a school of virtue; the catechists of this chapter held needles, not offices.

Live It This Week

Three small assignments. For Corinth: pray for your own city daily using the Lord's own sentence, "You have many people in this city," naming your parish, your street, your workplace, and asking to be led to one of His uncounted ones. For Ephesus: choose one sacramental in your home, holy water, a blessed crucifix, a rosary, and use it once this week rightly: with a deliberate prayer, asking the grace God gives through the Church's blessing and intercession, never treating the object as machinery. For Priscilla's workshop: if a correction has been sitting undelivered in your heart for someone you love, deliver it her way this week: privately, charitably, and over food if you can manage it.

Memory Verse

"And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, 'Do not be afraid, but speak and do not be silent; for I am with you... for I have many people in this city.'" (Acts 18:9-10)

Before Next Session

Read Acts 20 through 23, once. Note carefully what day of the week the church at Troas gathers, and why Luke says they gathered. Then watch what an apostle says when he knows he is saying goodbye.

Catechism References

CCC 1667-1670 (sacramentals) · CCC 1674 (the veneration of relics) · CCC 2111 (superstition, the counterfeit)