

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:

Cut to the Heart

Acts of the Apostles, Chapter 2

What We Found

Pentecost was not a surprise; it was scheduled. On the feast that Jewish tradition came to link with the giving of the Law at Sinai, God gave the Spirit, arriving as He arrived at Sinai, in fire and overwhelming sound. And we found the number hidden in plain sight: on the day the Law came, about three thousand fell after the golden calf (Exodus 32:28); on the day the Spirit came, about three thousand were baptized and lived (Acts 2:41). "The written code kills, but the Spirit gives life" (2 Corinthians 3:6).

We also found Babel running in reverse: at Babel one proud people was scattered into many tongues, and at Pentecost many tongues were gathered into one people. The Church was born universal, with Parthians, Romans, Egyptians, and Arabs among her first hearers, a preview of everywhere she was headed.

When the crowd was cut to the heart and asked what to do, Peter's answer was sacramental: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (2:38), a promise "to you and to your children" (2:39). And we found the Church's first day already shaped like our Sunday: devoted to the apostles' teaching, the fellowship, the breaking of bread, and the prayers (2:42), a pattern the Church recognizes as the skeleton of the Mass, present in seed from the beginning.

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Augustine of Hippo, Sermon 271, on Pentecost (5th century)

St. Augustine preached that at Babel pride scattered one tongue into many, and at Pentecost humility gathered many tongues into one. The Church, speaking every language across the world, is herself the continuing miracle of Pentecost: whoever holds to her unity speaks, in a sense, in the tongues of all nations.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Justin Martyr, First Apology, 67 (2nd century)

Describing Sunday worship for the Roman emperor around AD 155, St. Justin lays out the sequence: the memoirs of the apostles and the prophets are read, the presider instructs, all rise for common prayers, then bread and wine are brought, thanks is given, and the gifts are distributed to all present. It is the pattern of Acts 2:42, and it is recognizably the Mass.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures (4th century)

St. Cyril taught the newly baptized that in baptism we truly die and are truly born again: we go down into the water bearing our sins and come up alive, having received the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit, just as Peter promised at Pentecost. Acts 2:38 is not a figure of speech; it is what happened to you at the font.

Live It This Week

Go to Mass this week with Acts 2:42 written on a card or in your phone. Your one assignment: find all four marks. Note the moment the apostles' teaching is proclaimed, the moment the fellowship is visible, the moment the bread is broken, and the prayers you pray with the whole Church. Afterward, write one sentence: which of the four moved you most, and why? Bring your sentence next week.

Memory Verse

"And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers." (Acts 2:42)

Before Next Session

Read Acts 3 and 4, once, in one sitting. Notice what the apostles have, what they lack, and what they refuse to stop doing.

Catechism References

CCC 731-732 (Pentecost) · CCC 1226-1227 (baptism from Pentecost onward) · CCC 1342 (faithful to the breaking of bread) · CCC 2624 (the first community at prayer)

What I Have I Give You

Acts of the Apostles, Chapters 3 and 4

What We Found

The first miracle Luke narrates in detail happened on the way to prayer, at the hour of the evening sacrifice. A man lame from birth, carried and laid daily at the temple gate to beg from the worshipers going in, was told to look up, and heard the Church's permanent bank statement: "I have no silver and gold, but I give you what I have; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk" (3:6). Word, name, and touch together, and the man went in "walking and leaping," exactly as Isaiah 35:6 promised the lame would do when God came to save.

Peter refused all credit: not our power, not our piety, but the Name, and faith in the Name (3:12-16). Yet the Name chose to work through Peter's voice and Peter's hand, the pattern behind every sacrament: God's power, man's instrument. Before the same court that condemned Jesus, Peter declared that "there is salvation in no one else" (4:12), and the council could find only one explanation for the boldness of uneducated, common men: "they had been with Jesus" (4:13).

And we found where boldness comes from. Threatened and released, the community did not pray for safety. They prayed Psalm 2, asked God for boldness to keep speaking, and the place where they were gathered was shaken (4:29-31). Boldness is not a personality type. It is a grace, and it can be asked for.

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Bede the Venerable, Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles (8th century)

St. Bede reads the man lame from birth as an image of fallen humanity: laid daily at the door of worship yet unable to walk into it by his own strength, until he is raised by the hand of the Church acting in the name of Christ. What silver and gold could never do, the Name does, and his leaping is the joy of every soul lifted by grace.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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

Chrysostom lingers on the council's astonishment at uneducated, common men. The apostles' power was not eloquence or rank but the evidence that they had been with Jesus. The man who is much with Christ in prayer, he says, will not be able to stay timid about Him in public.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Cyprian of Carthage, On the Lord's Prayer (3rd century)

St. Cyprian taught that the Church's prayer is public and common, one people praying as one: we say Our Father, not My Father, because our prayer is common, offered as one body. The believers of Acts 4 lifting their voices with one accord, and the room shaking, is the picture of what united prayer does.

Live It This Week

Two assignments, both small and both real. First, pray for boldness by name: choose the one situation where you consistently go quiet about your faith, and every day this week pray the Church's prayer from Acts 4:29, that the Lord grant his servants to speak the word with all boldness, naming that situation out loud. Second, give what you have: one act this week of giving Christ rather than things, and the simplest form is an offer to pray with someone, not just for them, on the spot, briefly, by name.

Memory Verse

"And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

Before Next Session

Read Acts 5:1 through 6:7, once. Some of it will disturb you. Let it; we will face it honestly together.

Catechism References

CCC 1421 (Christ heals through His Church) · CCC 2666 (the name of Jesus) · CCC 776 (the Church, sacrament of salvation) · CCC 425 (we cannot but speak)

We Must Obey God Rather Than Men

Acts of the Apostles 5:1-6:7

What We Found

We faced the hardest scene in early Acts without flinching. The sin of Ananias and Sapphira was never the money, which Peter says was theirs to keep (5:4); it was the lie, a performed holiness offered on holy ground, and Peter named the offended party: "you have not lied to men but to God" (5:4). We found their Old Testament twin in Achan (Joshua 7), and with him a pattern Scripture invites us to see: at the beginning of a covenant God guards its threshold, teaching once and unforgettably that His presence is real and cannot be play-acted before. And hidden in Peter's grammar we found a confession the Fathers treasured: lying to the Holy Spirit is lying to God, because the Spirit is God.

Arrested again, the apostles gave the Church her charter of conscience, "We must obey God rather than men" (5:29), and modeled its narrowness: no riot, no flight, no contempt, only open obedience to God and joy under dishonor for the Name (5:41). The great rabbi Gamaliel stated the book's thesis for us: if this undertaking is of God, no one will be able to overthrow it (5:39).

Then the Church met a painful internal dispute, overlooked widows, and answered it not with a policy alone but with a solemn appointment: seven men "full of the Spirit and of wisdom," set apart with prayer and the laying on of hands (6:3-6), a gesture that recalls Moses commissioning Joshua (Numbers 27; Deuteronomy 34:9). The Church's tradition sees here the roots of the diaconate, and the result was not stagnation but explosion: the word increased, disciples multiplied, and even a great many priests became obedient to the faith (6:7).

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Ignatius of Antioch, Letter to the Trallians, 3 (around AD 107)

Barely two generations after Acts 6, St. Ignatius writes that the Church is recognized by her threefold ministry: let all revere the deacons as Jesus Christ, the bishop as a type of the Father, and the presbyters as the council of God, for without these there is no Church. What Acts 6 plants, Ignatius already describes as the universal structure of the churches.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Basil the Great, On the Holy Spirit (4th century)

Defending the divinity of the Holy Spirit, St. Basil reasons from Peter's own words to Ananias: to lie to the Holy Spirit is to lie not to men but to God. The Spirit is therefore not a creature or a force but is Himself God, adored and glorified with the Father and the Son.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. John Chrysostom, Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles, Homily 14 (4th century)

On the choosing of the Seven, Chrysostom marvels at the arrangement: the apostles set the criteria and invite the community to present men full of the Spirit, then make the appointment their own through prayer and the laying on of hands. The complaint of the overlooked is honored, and the ministry of the word loses nothing

while the ministry of tables gains everything.

Live It This Week

Two assignments aimed at the two halves of this session. First, hidden generosity: do one genuinely generous thing this week that no one will ever know about, no mention, no post, no hint, the exact inversion of Ananias (Matthew 6:3-4). Second, honesty before God: make one careful examination of conscience focused on a single question, where am I performing a holiness I am not living? And if something surfaces that has been hidden a long time, take it to Confession, where what destroyed Ananias is confessed aloud with contrition and destroyed instead by Christ's absolution.

Memory Verse

"We must obey God rather than men." (Acts 5:29)

Before Next Session

Read Acts 6:8 through the end of chapter 7, once. It is one man's speech and its cost. Read it slowly enough to hear him.

Catechism References

CCC 1554, 1569-1571 (the diaconate and Holy Orders) · CCC 685 (the Spirit is God) · CCC 827 (a holy Church clasping sinners) · CCC 2242 (obeying God rather than men)

I See the Heavens Opened

Acts of the Apostles 6:8-8:3

What We Found

Stephen's long speech turned out to be a prosecution brief built on two arguments running through Israel's whole story: God has never been confined to one land or one building, appearing to Abraham in Mesopotamia, to Joseph in Egypt, to Moses at a bush; and Israel has always rejected her God-sent deliverers at the first encounter, Joseph sold by his brothers and recognized at the second visit, Moses refused and then sent back as ruler and deliverer. The pattern landed on the present tense: the Righteous One Himself, rejected at the first encounter, and, hidden inside the indictment, the hope of a second.

On the temple, Stephen honored what God commanded and condemned only the presumption that God could be contained or owned. Solomon had said both truths in one breath at the dedication itself: heaven cannot contain you, yet let your eyes be open toward this house (1 Kings 8:27-30). Presence by gift, not by containment, the same two truths the lamp beside every tabernacle confesses.

Then we watched the first martyr die like his Master, almost word for word: "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" beside "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit"; "Lord, do not hold this sin against them" beside "Father, forgive them." One difference: Stephen prayed his dying prayers to Jesus. And at the edge of the scene stood a young man named Saul, minding coats, while Stephen's intercession for his killers rose past him toward heaven. The believers scattered through Judea and Samaria, and the map of Acts 1:8 turned its second page, driven forward by the very persecution meant to close the book.

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Augustine of Hippo, Sermon 315, on St. Stephen (5th century)

St. Augustine drew a straight line from the martyr's last prayer to the Church's greatest missionary: if Stephen had not prayed, the Church would not have Paul. The stones that struck Stephen were answered by the intercession he offered while they struck.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Fulgentius of Ruspe, Sermon 3 on St. Stephen (6th century)

St. Fulgentius says that love was Stephen's weapon, and by it he was everywhere victorious: love of God that did not yield to the raging council, and love of neighbor that interceded for the very men stoning him. Stephen went first, and Paul followed after, helped by Stephen's prayer, so that now the two rejoice together where there is no envy.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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

Chrysostom marvels that even the raging council could not help seeing Stephen's face like the face of an angel, the grace within him shining out in his very appearance. Gentleness under injustice, we might add, is itself a kind of proof: rage can counterfeit conviction, but it cannot counterfeit peace.

Live It This Week

One assignment, the hardest this study will ever give you. Choose your Saul: the person who has hurt you, mocked your faith, or stands furthest from God among the people you know. Every day this week, pray Stephen's prayer for that person by name: "Lord, do not hold this sin against them," adding one sentence asking God to do for them what He did for the coat-minder. Do not tell them. Do not expect to feel warm. Pray anyway, and remember Augustine's arithmetic: one dying man's prayer for his enemies gave the Church thirteen epistles and half the book of Acts.

Memory Verse

"And he knelt down and cried with a loud voice, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them.'" (Acts 7:60)

Before Next Session

Read Acts 8:4-40, once. Watch where the Gospel goes, who carries it, and what happens in a chariot on a desert road.

Catechism References

CCC 2473-2474 (martyrdom, the supreme witness) · CCC 2844 (forgiveness of enemies) · CCC 659-664 (the Son of Man at God's right hand)

How Can I, Unless Someone Guides Me?

Acts of the Apostles 8:4-40

What We Found

The Gospel crossed its first great frontier, into Samaria, the long family wound, and it was carried not by an apostle but by Philip, one of the Seven set apart over a food dispute (traditionally counted among the first deacons). The city received the word with joy, and then something remarkable: though truly baptized, the Samaritans had not yet received the Spirit's descent until Peter and John came from Jerusalem, prayed, and laid hands on them (8:14-17). At the healing of an ancient schism, the Church has always seen the point: the new believers were visibly joined to the one apostolic Church, and in that laying on of hands the Church has always recognized the origin of Confirmation; the Catechism quotes this very passage (CCC 1288, 1315).

Simon the magician tried to buy the power in the apostles' hands, giving the Church a word, simony, and giving history a backhanded testimony: his attempted purchase shows he saw something real, and objectively given, in the apostles' hands.

Then the chariot. The Ethiopian official was the best-case reader of Scripture in the ancient world, devout, humble, literate, holding Isaiah itself, and his honest answer stands in the inspired text forever: "How can I, unless someone guides me?" God's response was to send a guide from within the Church, and guided reading ran straight down to the water: "See, here is water! What is to prevent my being baptized?" And we found the tenderest thing in the chapter: three chapters past the passage he was puzzling over, the scroll on his lap promised that the eunuch and the foreigner, both once excluded, would receive in God's house a name better than sons and daughters (Isaiah 56:3-7). He was holding his own invitation, and Philip showed him the Host who wrote it. He went on his way rejoicing.

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Cyril of Jerusalem, Mystagogical Catechesis 3, On Chrism (4th century)

St. Cyril explains that as Christ was anointed with the Holy Spirit after His baptism, so the newly baptized are anointed with the holy chrism and sealed, receiving the same Spirit to strengthen them against the adversary; and he insists that this chrism is no ordinary ointment. The gift is not symbolic: the Spirit Himself is conferred. Reading Acts 8, the Church has recognized in the apostles' laying on of hands the origin of this same sealing (CCC 1288).

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Jerome, Letter 53, to Paulinus (4th century)

St. Jerome points to the Ethiopian: a devout man, reading the very words of God, holding the book and yet not knowing Him whom the book proclaimed, until Philip was sent to open the text and show him Jesus. Jerome's lesson to Paulinus is that Scripture is the one book no one masters alone; it asks for a teacher. And the eunuch shows us where to begin: the reader humble enough to ask for a guide is already reading well.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Irenaeus of Lyons, Against Heresies, Book III, 12.8 (2nd century)

St. Irenaeus recalls the eunuch as a model of readiness: already devout, already searching the prophets, he believed and was baptized without delay. Irenaeus adds the tradition the early Church treasured, that the man returned home as a herald of the faith, the first fruit of the Gospel among the nations of the south.

Live It This Week

Two assignments in the spirit of the chariot. First, read guided: take next week's chapter, Acts 9:1-31, and read it once with a Catholic guide at your elbow, the notes of a Catholic study Bible or a trusted Catholic commentary, deliberately practicing accompanied reading. Notice at least one thing the guide showed you that you would have driven past alone. Second, ask a Philip question: once this week, gently ask someone, "What do you actually make of God these days?", and then do what Philip did first: listen.

Memory Verse

"Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this scripture he told him the good news of Jesus." (Acts 8:35)

Before Next Session

Read Acts 9:1-31 with your Catholic guide alongside, as promised above. Pay attention to a road, a voice, and a street called Straight.

Catechism References

CCC 1288, 1315 (the origin of Confirmation) · CCC 112-114 (reading Scripture within the Church) · CCC 2121 (simony)

Why Do You Persecute Me?

Acts of the Apostles 9:1-31

What We Found

Six weeks of waiting ended in a persecutor's paperwork. Saul's arrest warrants named the people he was hunting: "any belonging to the Way" (9:2). The first appearance of the name the movement would carry is the name on the cover of this study, and it confesses what Christianity is: not a philosophy held but a road walked, after the One who said "I am the way" (John 14:6). Watch for the name; Luke is not finished with it.

On that road, the doubled call of the patriarchs, "Saul, Saul," like Abraham, Abraham and Moses, Moses, came from the last voice Saul's theology allowed: "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting." Saul, so far as we know, had never met Jesus; he struck at Christians. The pronoun *me* carries the whole doctrine of the Mystical Body: the Church so united to Christ that her wounds are His. St. Augustine called it the totus Christus, the whole Christ, Head and members, and St. Joan of Arc said it in one sentence the Catechism preserves: about Jesus Christ and the Church, "I simply know they are just one thing" (CCC 795).

Then three days blind and fasting, a personal echo of the sign of Jonah, and the Lord's strange economy: rather than finish the conversion Himself on the road, Christ sent Ananias, an ordinary disciple whose first word to the persecutor was "Brother," and through whose hands came sight, the Holy Spirit, and baptism that washed his sins away (9:17-18; 22:16). Even the apostle called directly by heaven received grace the way Christ ordinarily gives it: through the Church. And when Jerusalem was too afraid to receive him, Barnabas staked his own name to vouch for the convert nobody trusted. The chapter that opened with murder in the air closed with the church in peace, multiplied, because God did not merely stop His enemy. He hired him.

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Augustine of Hippo, Expositions of the Psalms and Sermons on the Conversion of St. Paul (5th century)

St. Augustine never tired of the pronoun. The Head was in heaven, untouchable, yet He cried "why do you persecute me?" because the Head cries out for His members, as the tongue says "you are stepping on me" when the foot is crushed. Christ and His Church are the whole Christ, and whoever strikes the least believer strikes Him.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. John Chrysostom, Panegyrics on St. Paul (4th century)

Chrysostom marvels that grace took the Church's most violent enemy at the peak of his fury and made of him her most tireless servant. The wolf was turned into more than a shepherd: into a man who counted chains as trophies. No sinner may despair after Damascus, and no saint may boast.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Bede the Venerable, Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles (8th century)

St. Bede lingers on the Lord's strange economy: Christ could have taught Saul everything on the road, yet He sent him into the city to receive the word, the Spirit, and baptism through Ananias. The Lord so honors the ministry of His Church that even one called by a voice from heaven is perfected through the hands of a fellow

servant, that the proud might learn that no one is Christian alone.

Live It This Week

Keep praying for your Saul from last week, by name, daily; you now know what those prayers can purchase. Then add the two roles this chapter modeled. Be an Ananias once: one concrete act of welcome toward someone you have feared, resented, or avoided, beginning, if you can manage it, with the word brother or sister. And be a Barnabas once: one act of vouching, publicly including, introducing, or standing beside someone who is new, returning, or distrusted. Do both quietly. The hinge moments of Church history run through people whose names almost nobody remembers, and whose obedience God never forgets.

Memory Verse

"But the Lord said to him, 'Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel.'" (Acts 9:15)

Before Next Session

Read Acts 9:32 through the end of chapter 11, once. Peter takes a journey, sees something on a rooftop that shocks him, and a door swings open that will never close again.

Catechism References

CCC 787-789, 795 (the Body of Christ, the whole Christ) · CCC 1263 (baptism washes away all sins)

What God Has Cleansed

Acts of the Apostles 9:32-11:30

What We Found

We found a buried treasure first: Peter, whose formal name is Simon Bar-Jona, son of Jonah (Matthew 16:17), was lodging in Joppa, the very port from which Jonah fled rather than carry God's word to the Gentiles (Jonah 1:3). The son of Jonah, in Jonah's port, received Jonah's assignment, and this time he went.

God choreographed both sides of the meeting: an angel to Cornelius, whose prayers and alms had ascended "as a memorial before God" in the temple's own sacrificial vocabulary (10:4; Leviticus 2:2), and the vision of the sheet to Peter, which Peter himself interpreted for us: "God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean" (10:28). While Peter was still preaching, the Spirit fell on the Gentiles, "just as on us at the beginning" as Peter would testify (11:15), God's own public signature authorizing their full admission, and Peter's response was to command their baptism at once (10:44-48). When Jerusalem objected, his testimony ended the matter: "who was I that I could withstand God?", and the church glorified God: "then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance unto life" (11:18). The vision came to Peter, the door opened by Peter's word, and the keys of Matthew 16 turned in history's largest lock.

And at Antioch, where the scattered believers dared to preach to Greeks and Barnabas fetched Saul from Tarsus to help teach them, the disciples "were for the first time called Christians" (11:26), a name likely coined by outsiders and worn until it shone. The chapter that began with a fight over eating with Gentiles ended with the Gentile church sending famine relief to Jerusalem: one Body, its life circulating both directions.

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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

Chrysostom stands in awe of the choreography of Acts 10: an angel to Cornelius at one hour, a vision to Peter at another, the messengers reaching the gate at the very moment of Peter's perplexity. When God opens a door this large, He turns every hinge Himself.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Ignatius of Antioch, Letter to the Smyrnaeans, 8 (around AD 107)

From the very city where the disciples were first called Christians, its second-generation bishop gave the Church her other great adjective: wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church, the first surviving use of the phrase. What the house of Cornelius proved, Antioch named.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Augustine of Hippo, On Baptism, Against the Donatists (around AD 400)

St. Augustine returns often to Cornelius: a man whose prayers and alms God accepted before baptism, and who nevertheless was not left where he was, but was sent Peter, was taught, and was baptized. Heaven honored the seeker by incorporating him, not by exempting him.

Live It This Week

One assignment with two halves, both at a table. First, cross a line: identify the category of person you treat as common or unclean and take one concrete step of fellowship across it this week, a shared meal or coffee if at all possible, an unhurried conversation if not. Second, feed a Cornelius: pray daily for the sincere seeker you know, and take one step toward connecting them with the Church, an invitation, an introduction, a book placed in their hands. God still prefers to answer seekers through people.

Memory Verse

"What God has cleansed, you must not call common." (Acts 10:15)

Before Next Session

Read Acts 12 and 13, once. Note what season it is when Peter is arrested, and what the church at Antioch is doing when the Holy Spirit speaks.

Catechism References

CCC 831 (the Church is catholic) · CCC 552-553 (the keys) · CCC 781-782 (the People of God from every nation)

Set Apart for Me

Acts of the Apostles, Chapters 12 and 13

What We Found

We held the hard mystery first: James executed, Peter delivered, both apostles, both faithful; the Church's earnest prayer for Peter is on record (12:5), and her grief for James needs none. God's faithfulness is not a safety guarantee; He knows when to crown a servant with martyrdom and when to send the angel, and the Church lives on both.

Then the discovery: Luke tells Peter's rescue as a personal Exodus, set in the Passover season. The angel comes by night, light shines in the cell, the chains fall, and the angel's commands echo Israel's Passover posture, girded and sandaled for departure in haste (Exodus 12:11), down to Peter's wrapped mantle, past the guards and through the iron gate, until Peter names it himself: "the Lord rescued me from the hand of Herod," as Israel was delivered from the hand of Pharaoh. Meanwhile the church prayed earnestly and then refused to believe its own answered prayer, leaving Peter knocking while they debated; God answers the praying Church she actually is, doubts and all. And the same angel of the Lord who woke the humble man into freedom struck down the king who accepted worship, while Luke posted his serene scoreboard: "But the word of God grew and multiplied" (12:24).

Then the pivot of the book: at Antioch, while the church was worshiping the Lord and fasting, Luke's word is leitourgountōn, the root of our word liturgy, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul," and the mission was conferred with fasting, prayer, and the laying on of hands (13:2-3). The greatest missionary movement in history was born in the liturgy, not a planning meeting. Paul's first sermon preached Christ from Israel's own psalter, the same Psalm 16 Peter used at Pentecost, offering justification that the law of Moses could never give (13:38-39), and when opposition came, the missionaries claimed Isaiah's commission, a light for the Gentiles to the uttermost parts of the earth, and left town "filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit" (13:52).

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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

Chrysostom sets chapter 12 as a contest of weapons: Herod has soldiers, chains, and an execution date; the Church has earnest prayer. And the prayer proved stronger than the iron. The Church's power has never been in her numbers or her friends at court, but in her knees.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Leo the Great, Sermons on the Apostles Peter and Paul (5th century)

St. Leo preached that the chains of Peter were more precious to the Church than any triumph, for in them the weakness of man and the power of Christ were displayed together: the Lord knows both when to crown His servants with martyrdom, as James, and when to send His angel, as Peter.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Bede the Venerable, Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles (8th century)

St. Bede reads Peter's rescue through Passover eyes: as Israel, girded and sandaled, was led out of Egypt by night, so Peter was led out of prison at the season of Unleavened Bread. In the first apostle's deliverance every Christian may read his own: roused by grace, loosed from chains he could not break.

Live It This Week

Two assignments, one vertical and one horizontal. First, put a decision on the altar: choose the most consequential open question in your life and carry it deliberately into the liturgy, one Mass or holy hour this week attended specifically to lay it before the Lord, with a small fast beforehand if health permits. Do not demand an answer; practice the listening. Second, build a Mary's house: choose one person or intention that needs earnest intercession and pray for it daily until next session. Expect to be as surprised as Rhoda.

Memory Verse

"I have set you to be a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the uttermost parts of the earth."
(Acts 13:47)

Before Next Session

Read Acts 14 and 15, once.

Catechism References

CCC 849-850 (the Church is missionary by nature) · CCC 1070 (liturgy, the work of God) · CCC 2636 (the intercession of the first communities)

It Has Seemed Good to the Holy Spirit and to Us

Acts of the Apostles, Chapters 14 and 15

What We Found

At Lystra we watched the whiplash of crowds, hailed as gods and then stoned by the same crowds, and we watched the man who once held the coats at Stephen's stoning receive Stephen's death and get up and walk back into the city. His summary stands over the whole Christian life: "through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God" (14:22). And before leaving, the missionaries installed in every single church, with prayer and fasting, appointed elders, presbyterous, the office whose very name wore down through the centuries into the English word priest (14:23). The Church has never traveled without it.

Then Jerusalem. The demand that Gentiles be circumcised to be saved was a rival gospel armed with real Scripture, and it was settled the way the apostolic Church settled it: gathered in council. The apostles and elders gathered; there was much debate; then Peter rose, recalled that God chose his mouth for the Gentiles' first hearing, and declared, "we believe that we shall be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will", and all the assembly kept silence (15:7-12). James confirmed from the prophet Amos: God is rebuilding "the tent of David, which has fallen," so that all the Gentiles may seek the Lord, which answered a question left open on the study's first night: the kingdom the disciples asked about in Acts 1:6 is being restored, present now in seed and beginning as the Church (CCC 541, 669), and the streaming-in of the nations is its proof. The decree went out to churches the council had never visited, in words no merely human assembly would dare: "it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us" (15:28), and the churches that received it were strengthened and grew (16:4-5).

And we did not look away from the ending: Paul and Barnabas, fresh from defending the Church's unity, quarreled so sharply over John Mark that they parted. God's arithmetic with the wreckage: two mission teams instead of one, Mark restored by Barnabas's patience until Paul himself called him "very useful in serving me" (2 Timothy 4:11), and the man who left at Perga became, by early tradition, the Evangelist Mark. Saints clash; providence does not.

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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

Chrysostom lingers on the order of the council: much questioning, for the Church does not fear debate, then Peter rose first, as ever, and after he had spoken all the multitude kept silence. James, ruler of the church at Jerusalem, speaks last and frames the decree; each office kept its place, and the Spirit spoke through their harmony.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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

St. Irenaeus appeals to the council's own letter and its decision freeing the Gentiles, which he cites as the apostles' judgment still in force in the churches. The council is standing proof that Christ's Church can know and declare the truth with one voice, and that the apostles' judgment on the Gentiles still standing in the churches of his own day.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Vincent of Lérins, Commonitorium, ch. 23 (5th century)

St. Vincent taught that the Church's understanding of doctrine truly grows, but as a body grows, always in the same sense and the same meaning. Vincent states the principle; the application to Acts 15 is this study's. Read by his rule, nothing of the Gospel was changed at Jerusalem; rather the Church, guided by the Spirit, came to see what the Gospel had contained from the beginning, and declared it so the faithful might hold it with certainty.

Live It This Week

Two assignments from the council floor. First, pray for the successors: every day this week, pray by name for the Holy Father and for your own bishop, the living heirs of the men who gathered in Acts 15, asking for them courage in debate, fidelity to the deposit, and the Spirit's assistance in judgment. Second, read one conciliar page: find Dei Verbum, the Second Vatican Council's constitution on divine revelation, and read just paragraph 10, three minutes at most. Acts 15 shows those principles at their apostolic source; go see how the Church describes them, and bring one sentence of reaction next week.

Memory Verse

"For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things." (Acts 15:28)

Before Next Session

Read Acts 16 and 17, once. A door closes, a man of Macedonia calls in the night, a jailer asks the most important question in the world, and Paul takes the Gospel to the intellectuals of Athens.

Catechism References

CCC 85-87 (the living Magisterium) · CCC 890-891 (the charism of truth) · CCC 1577, 1590 (presbyters and Holy Orders)

What Must I Do to Be Saved?

Acts of the Apostles, Chapters 16 and 17

What We Found

The Spirit steered the mission by closed doors as truly as open ones, funneling Paul's team to the coast until a night vision, the man of Macedonia pleading "come over and help us," pulled the Gospel onto the continent of Europe. And at verse 10 the pronouns quietly changed to "we": the author, whom the Church has always known as Luke, boarded at Troas, and stretches of Acts from here on read as eyewitness memoir.

At Philippi we met the first European converts. Lydia, of whom Luke wrote one of the great sentences on grace: "The Lord opened her heart to give heed to what was said by Paul" (16:14). As she listened, before any resolve of her own, God unlocked the door from the inside. And the jailer, at midnight, after the hymns and the earthquake, asking the most important question in the world, "Men, what must I do to be saved?", and receiving the full apostolic answer within the hour: faith, the word spoken to all in his house, baptism "at once, with all his family," a shared table, and joy. Three households enter the Church whole in these chapters and the next, Lydia's, the jailer's, and (in 18:8) Crispus's, and the Catechism points to exactly these texts on the ancient practice of baptizing households, within which, the Catechism carefully notes, infants may well have been baptized too (CCC 1252): the covenant God has dealt in households since Abraham, and grace has always gone first.

At Athens, Paul showed the Church how to speak to a culture that has never read her Scriptures: begin at their own altar "to an unknown god," quote their own poets, honor every seed of truth as preparation for the Gospel (CCC 843), and then refuse to soften the summit: repentance, the appointed Man, and the resurrection. Some mocked, some delayed, and some believed. Even a perfect sermon converts some, not all, and the apostle's peace never depended on the percentage.

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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

Chrysostom pauses over Lydia: the Lord opened her heart, yet she gave heed; grace did not force the door but unlocked it, and her freedom walked through. And the opened heart immediately opened her home. Hospitality, for Chrysostom, is faith's first reflex.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Cyprian of Carthage, Letter 64, to Fidus (AD 253)

Asked whether baptism should wait until an infant's eighth day, after the pattern of circumcision, St. Cyprian answered with a council of sixty-six bishops: do not wait even that long. The mercy and grace of God is to be denied to no one born of man. For Cyprian and those sixty-six bishops in AD 253, whether to baptize infants was not the question at all; the only debate was how soon.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Justin Martyr, Second Apology (2nd century)

St. Justin taught that seeds of the divine Word were scattered among the pagans, so that whatever has been said

truly by anyone belongs to us Christians. What Paul did at Athens, claiming the pagans' own altar and poets for Christ, Justin turned into a method the Church has carried into culture after culture.

Live It This Week

Two assignments, one for your house and one for your city. First, the household practice: institute one realistic practice of faith at home this week, grace before meals, a blessing at bedtime, a weekly decade of the rosary, and hold it daily; households are converted by rhythms more than by arguments, and yours is the first Macedonia you have been called to. Second, the Athens bridge: with the most secular person you genuinely like, have one conversation that begins on their altar, asking sincerely about the true thing they already love, and listening for the unknown God behind it. Do not force the summit; walk partway up the hill together.

Memory Verse

"And they said, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.'" (Acts 16:31)

Before Next Session

Read Acts 18 and 19, once. Watch for a discouraged apostle given a staggering promise in the night, a brilliant preacher humbly corrected over dinner, and a city where the Gospel gets expensive.

Catechism References

CCC 1252 (households and the baptism of infants) · CCC 27-28 (the desire for God) · CCC 843 (preparation for the Gospel)

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)

On the First Day of the Week

Acts of the Apostles, Chapters 20 through 23

What We Found

A thread thirteen weeks long resolved at Troas. "On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread" (20:7): the Resurrection's own day, an assembly whose stated purpose was the bread, word running long and then the loaf broken before dawn, and Paul budgeting seven days in the city to be present for it. The Catechism quotes this very verse: it was above all on the first day of the week that the Christians met to break bread, and from that time down to our own day the celebration has continued, with the same fundamental structure (CCC 1343). You have kept the Troas appointment every Sunday of your life. And in the middle of that first recorded Sunday assembly, young Eutychus fell asleep in the window, fell three stories, and was raised when Paul fell upon him and embraced him, an embrace that recalls Elijah and Elisha raising the dead raising the dead: death entered the Sunday assembly and resurrection answered it, with the Eucharist at the center.

At Miletus, Paul gave the presbyters of Ephesus his farewell, calling those same elders, in Luke's Greek, episkopoi, overseers (the RSV2CE renders it guardians), made so "by the Holy Spirit," and commanding them to shepherd "the church of God which he obtained with his own blood" (20:28). He warned that fierce wolves would come, even from among their own selves: Scripture's own realism about failing shepherds, commanded to vigilance, not naivete. And he left us a treasure: "remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive'", a saying of Christ found in no Gospel, carried by the Church's living memory until Acts wrote it down.

Then the road to Jerusalem, and we discovered that Luke shaped it deliberately on his Master's: the resolute journey against all pleading, Agabus's prophetic sign with the belt, Paul's Gethsemane ("I am ready not only to be imprisoned but even to die at Jerusalem for the name"), the community's surrender ("The will of the Lord be done"), the temple seizure, and the mob's cry "Away with him!", an echo, nearly word for word, of the shout raised against Jesus. To belong to the Way is to walk the Master's shape of road. And at the section's end, the Lord stood by Paul in the night: "as you have testified about me at Jerusalem, so you must bear witness also at Rome."

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Ignatius of Antioch, Letter to the Magnesians, 9 (around AD 107)

St. Ignatius describes the first Christians as no longer keeping the sabbath but living in accordance with the Lord's Day, on which also our life rose again through Him. Within living memory of the apostles, the first day of the week, the day of Troas, was already the Church's day.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Irenaeus of Lyons, Against Heresies, IV.18 and V.2 (2nd century)

Our teaching agrees with the Eucharist, said St. Irenaeus, and the Eucharist in turn confirms our teaching: the bread and cup, having received the Word of God, become the body and blood of Christ. What the Church does on the first day of the week is her doctrine made visible.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Gregory the Great, Pastoral Rule (6th century)

St. Gregory took Miletus as his charter for shepherds: keep watch, for the wolves Paul foretold do come, from outside and within; and let the ruler of souls remember whose blood purchased the flock he tends, for he watches over what God valued at the price of Himself.

Live It This Week

Two assignments, one for Sunday and one for the week. First, keep Troas: attend this Sunday's Mass deliberately gathered to break bread: arrive early enough to be recollected, follow the two-course shape you now know by heart, word then bread, and receive, if properly disposed, with the thought that the same fundamental structure has run unbroken from that lamplit upper room to your parish. If it has been a long time since Confession, let this be the week. Second, live the unwritten word: perform one act this week that is pure giving, with no possibility of return, saying the sentence to yourself as you do it: it is more blessed to give than to receive. You will be quoting Jesus by heart, from the Church's memory, exactly as Paul did.

Memory Verse

"...remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" (Acts 20:35)

Before Next Session

Read Acts 24 through 28, the finale, once, all the way to the last sentence. And FIND YOUR TAKE-HOME 1 with your sealed guess from the first week, and bring it. Do not open it early. We have an appointment.

Catechism References

CCC 1343 (the first day, the breaking of bread) · CCC 2174-2175 (Sunday, the Lord's Day) · CCC 861-862 (the apostles' office of shepherding, handed on)

And So We Came to Rome

Acts of the Apostles, Chapters 24 through 28, The End of the Study

What We Found

Before Governor Felix, Paul spoke the sentence our whole study was named for: "according to the Way, which they call a sect, I worship the God of our fathers" (24:14). The Way is not a breakaway sect but Israel's own faith arrived at its destination, the tent of David rebuilt with the nations streaming in. Through the trials, Luke stacked exonerations, Agrippa's verdict, "this man could have been set free", while heaven kept its own decree: the chains Paul could have escaped were the ticket God booked him to Rome.

In the storm we completed a discovery begun weeks ago: Jonah, the prophet fleeing God's call to the Gentiles, brought the storm on his ship and had to be cast out for the crew to live; Paul, the prophet obeying that call, was the reason all 276 aboard were spared: "God has granted you all those who sail with you" (27:24). Acts is the book of Jonah run in reverse. And in the storm's fourteenth night, Paul took bread, gave thanks, and broke it, verbs carrying the unmistakable family resemblance of the Last Supper and Emmaus, painted over an ordinary meal, most readers judge, on purpose: hope served at table in the middle of the storm, which is what the Church has done in every storm since, and at her altar the colors are not borrowed.

Then Rome, the opened guesses, and the secret the study's cover kept for fourteen weeks. Luke's account ends without one: no verdict, no martyrdom, only two years of Paul "preaching the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ quite openly and unhindered", and in Luke's Greek, the final word of the entire book is that last adverb, *akōlytōs*, unhindered. Paul was chained; the Word was not (2 Timothy 2:9). The hero of Acts was never Peter or Paul but the risen Christ acting through His Body, and His action has no final chapter because it had not ended when Luke's ink ran out, and it has not ended now. A wall has an end; a Way goes on. Acts 29 is the history of the Church, twenty centuries in progress, and as of fourteen weeks ago, it includes this table. The book ends unhindered because it hands you the pen.

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Clement of Rome, Letter to the Corinthians, 5 (around AD 96)

Writing from Rome within living memory, Clement holds up Peter, who after many labors bore his witness and went to his place of glory, and Paul, who taught the whole world and reached the limits of the West: the martyred examples, Clement says, of his own generation, remembered by the Roman church as her own; his letter is the earliest thread in the tradition that both crowned their witness at Rome.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Irenaeus of Lyons, Against Heresies, Book III, 3.2 (2nd century)

St. Irenaeus points every seeker to the very great and very ancient Church founded and organized at Rome by the two most glorious apostles, Peter and Paul, listing her bishops by name from the apostles to his own day. With this church, on account of its preeminent authority, every church must agree.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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

Preaching on the abrupt ending, Chrysostom says the author leaves the hearer thirsting, so that thereafter he supplies the rest by himself; for what needed to be shown was shown, that the word of God was not bound. The ending is not missing; it is delegated.

Live It, the Commissioning

Four final assignments. First, finish before the Lord: within seven days, make a visit to the Blessed Sacrament, alone, thank Him for fourteen weeks on the Way, and speak your Acts 29 sentence to Him: "I believe the Spirit is sending me to..." The study that began in an upper room should end before the tabernacle. Second, give the study away: choose the one discovery that most lit you up, the three thousand of Pentecost, the son of Jonah at Joppa, the last word of Acts, and tell it to one person outside the group this week; the Way spreads at the speed of one told story. Third, keep Sunday as Troas kept it, permanently (CCC 2177-2178). Fourth, do not scatter: hold the group to whatever next step you agreed on together. The book has no ending. Neither should this.

Memory Verse

"...preaching the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ quite openly and unhindered." (Acts 28:31)

Where the Way Goes From Here

If this study opened Acts for you, the roads out of it are many: the Letters of St. Paul, written along the very journeys you have now traveled; the Letters of St. Peter, the fisherman's own voice; or the Gospel of Luke, volume one, where every thread you traced was first spun. Ask your leader what this group walks next. The last word of Acts is not an ending. It is a permission slip.

Catechism References

CCC 834 (the Church of Rome, presiding in charity) · CCC 302-303 (providence, concrete and immediate) · CCC 2 (handing on the faith to the ends of the earth)