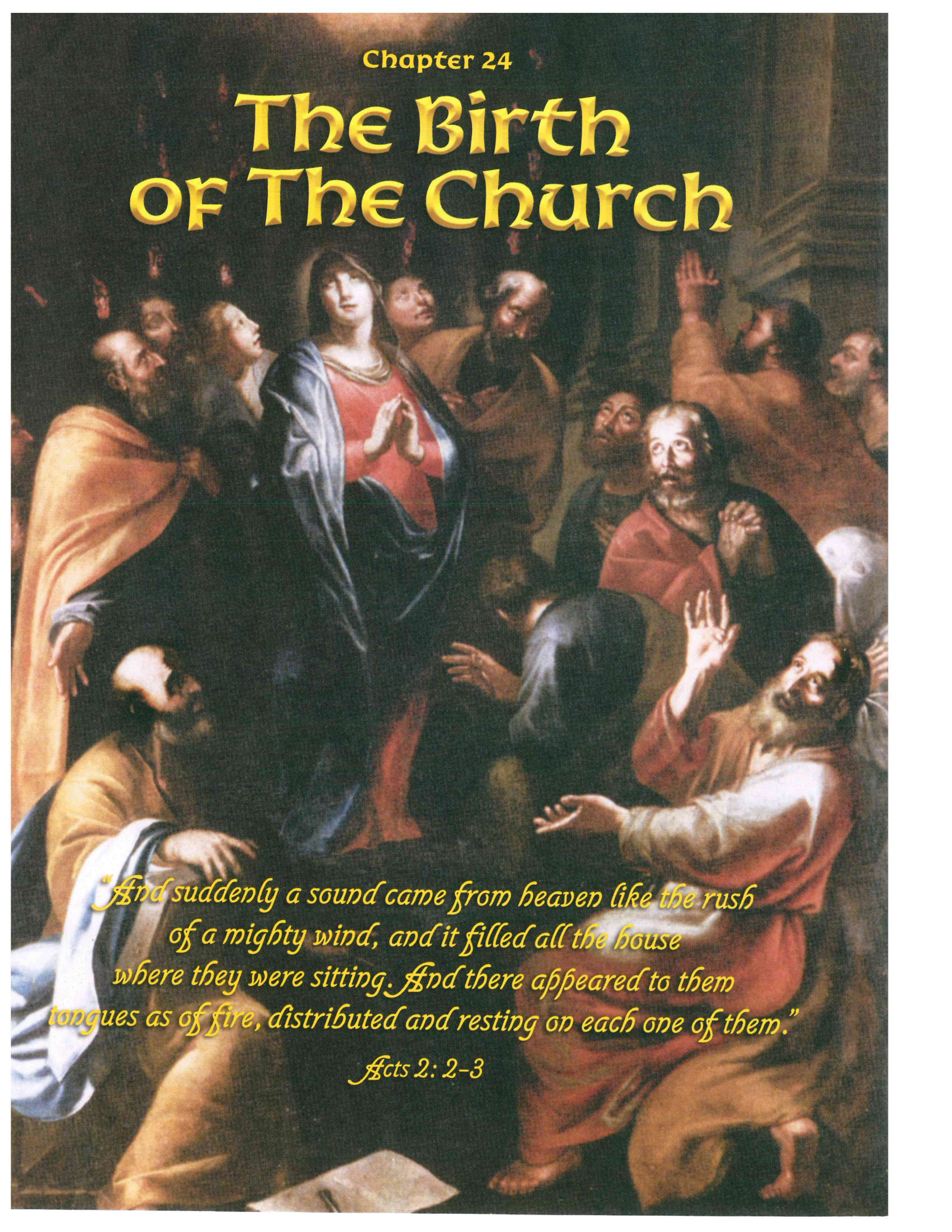


The Birth of The Church



“And suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them.”

Acts 2: 2-3

Chapter 24

The Birth of The Church



Read

Acts

1:1 - 2:47

8:4 - 25

Jesus had died and risen from the dead. He had appeared to many of his faithful friends and disciples. Everything had happened as he predicted it would. But one promise from before the beginning of his ministry had not yet been fulfilled.

When John the Baptist was baptizing crowds in the Jordan, he told them to expect a different kind of baptism from the one who would come after him. "I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the thong of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire."¹

Where was this baptism with the Holy Spirit and with fire?

30 A.D.

Seven weeks after Passover, on Pentecost morning, the disciples are filled with the Holy Spirit.

Spring 30 On the Sunday before Passover, Jesus rides into Jerusalem on a donkey; On Friday Jesus is crucified; On Sunday Jesus is risen.

31 A.D.

Seven Hellenist believers are chosen to assist the Twelve disciples.

31 Rome: Jews are allowed to return to the city; Emperor Tiberius has Sejanus executed for trying to seize the throne.

32 A.D.

The Apostles are arrested and harassed by the Sadducees for preaching the Resurrection.

33 A.D.

Stephen becomes embroiled in debates over Jesus in the Hellenist synagogues.

34 A.D.

34-35 Hellenist believers face the full brunt of Saul's persecution and scatter to other cities and countries.

35 A.D.

34 Stephen, one of the Seven Hellenists, is stoned to death for blasphemy; Saul of Tarsus leads brutal attacks against members of "the Way."

Restoring The Kingdom

For forty days after his resurrection, Jesus continued to teach his disciples, “speaking of the kingdom of God.”²

That word “kingdom” was the key to his teaching. Just as Jesus had spent forty days preparing for his ministry, now he was giving the Twelve forty days to prepare for their ministry. That ministry would be nothing less than restoring the only kingdom God had ever endorsed: the kingdom of David.

And while staying with them he charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, “you heard from me, for John baptized with water, but before many days you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 1: 4-5)

The baptism with the Holy Spirit was yet to come. Until then, the apostles should stay in Jerusalem. Jerusalem, of course, was David’s capital, and all the Old Testament prophets promised that it would once again be the capital of the kingdom—a new, greater kingdom, which would invite all the nations to worship God.

And many nations shall join themselves to the LORD in that day, and shall be my people; and I will dwell in the midst of you, and you shall know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you. And the LORD will inherit Judah as his portion in the holy land, and will again choose Jerusalem. (Zec 2: 11-12)

The book of Acts does not tell us exactly what Jesus said during most of those forty days. But by the end of that time, the apostles knew enough to ask the right question:

So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority. 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: 6-8)

Jesus has just drawn a verbal map of the Davidic kingdom: the center at Jerusalem, then Judea (the part that was left after the division of Israel and Judah), Samaria (the rest of the lost kingdom of Israel), and the end of the earth (all the Gentile nations).



Judaism At The Time Of Christ

Christ, high priest and unique mediator, has made of the Church “a kingdom, priests for his God and Father” (Rv 1: 6; cf. Rv 5: 9-10; 1 Pt 2: 5, 9). The whole community of believers is, as such, priestly. The faithful exercise their baptismal priesthood through their participation, each according to his own vocation, in Christ’s mission as priest, prophet, and king. Through the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation the faithful are “consecrated to be... a holy priesthood” (LG 10 § 1). (CCC 1546)

That was the last thing Jesus said to the apostles on earth. “And when he had said this, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight.”³ Mark adds that he “sat down at the right hand of God.”⁴ The right hand of a king was a place of honor.

Jesus had left the apostles with their last orders: that they should wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit, then restore the Davidic kingdom. Then Jesus himself was immediately enthroned “at the right hand of God”—the place of the Anointed One, the Son of David, the Son of God, according to Psalm 110:

The LORD says to my lord, “Sit at my right hand,
till I make your enemies your footstool.”
(Ps 110: 1)

The apostles are to restore the kingdom, and Jesus Christ sits enthroned as King. The ascension is a royal enthronement, not just a disappearance. Reigning from heaven, Jesus the King leaves his royal ministers on earth to handle the earthly affairs of the kingdom.

The Election Of Matthias

Jesus’ last orders showed the order of the restoration: first Israel must be restored, then the kingdom extended to the rest of the world.

The twelve apostles were symbolic heads of the twelve tribes of Israel, reunited under them. But there were only eleven apostles. Judas, the betrayer, was dead.

In those first days, the apostles had made their headquarters in the Upper Room—that same large room where Jesus had celebrated the Last Supper. There the apostles, Mary the mother of Jesus, the women who had followed Jesus, and other believers gathered every day to pray. Although the community was small, there were some believers who had followed Jesus from the beginning.

Peter, the leader on earth now that Jesus had ascended, decided that the restoration would have to begin by choosing a replacement for Judas.

In those days Peter stood up among the brethren (the company of persons was in all about a hundred and twenty) and said, “Brethren, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David, concerning Judas who was guide to those who arrested Jesus.... For it is written in the book of Psalms,

‘Let his habitation be desolate,
and let there be no one to live in it,’
and
‘His office let another take.’

So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection.”
(Acts 1: 15-16, 20-22)

As Peter had decided, the disciples decided to choose one man to replace Judas. They narrowed the choice down to two, and chose between them by lot, praying that the Lord would show which one he had chosen. The lot fell on Matthias, who became the twelfth apostle. Once again, Jesus' college of royal ministers on earth was complete.

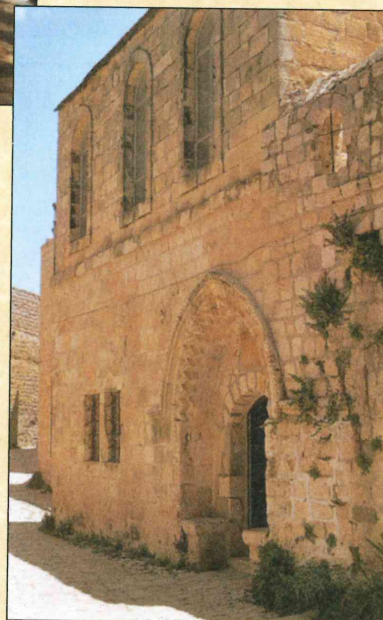
In Greek, the word translated "office" ("His *office* let another take") is *episkope*, the word from which we get the English word "episcopacy," which is related to the word "bishop." Another translation (from Challoner's Douay Bible) of Peter's quotation is "And his bishopric let another take." The bishoprics of the Twelve, who "constitute a single apostolic college" (CCC 880) have continued in unbroken succession to the bishops of today. Every Catholic bishop is, by his *office*, a successor to the apostles.

The bishops, established by "the Holy Spirit, succeed the apostles. They are the visible source and foundation of unity in their own particular churches" (LG 23). (CCC 938)

The Upper Room



On Mt. Zion, in the Old City, Christian pilgrims visit this room known as the Cenacle or Room of the Last Supper. The lower floor is a synagogue housing a cenotaph (empty tomb) worshiped by Jews as the Tomb of David. Although the room is a Crusader era basilica, the structure has traces of Roman era masonry and is traditionally identified as the site of the "Upper Room" of the Eucharist and the Pentecost.



The Seven Deacons of Acts 6: 1-7

"Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, the Hellenists [Greek-speaking Jews] murmured against the Hebrews [Aramaic-speaking Jews] because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution [of food]. And the twelve summoned the body of the disciples and said, 'It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. . . . pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the spirit and of wisdom, . . . and they chose. . . .'"

Stephen

Philip

Prochorus (Procurus, Apostle John's scribe)

Nicanor

Timon

Parmenas

Nicolaus (Nicolas)

Pentecost

The apostles, now with Matthias, continued to wait and pray until the feast of Pentecost. Fifty days after the Passover (“Pentecost” comes from the Greek word for “fifty”), Pentecost was a feast on which the Jews celebrated the giving of the Law to Moses on Sinai. Faithful Jews from all over the world came to Jerusalem for the celebration. The apostles were all gathered together, too.

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. (Acts 2: 1-4)

This at last was the baptism “with the Holy Spirit and with fire” that John the Baptist had predicted. And it happened just when Jerusalem was filled with worshipers from all over the world.

Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. And they were amazed and wondered, saying, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language?”...But others mocking said, “They are filled with new wine.” (Acts 2: 5-13)

As leader of the Twelve, Peter stood up and addressed the crowd. They were not drunk, he told them: after all, it was still the middle of the morning. Instead, this was the fulfillment of the prophecies. Joel had told us this would happen in the last days: the Spirit of God would be poured out on everyone.

The pouring out of the Spirit on Mary and the Apostles at Pentecost is a significant development in the relationship between God and man. God made covenants with men throughout the ages in order to bind the human and the divine. Jesus Christ, being both fully human and fully divine, perfectly completed this relationship by establishing the New Covenant. But what remained unanswered at the time of His Ascension was the way in which this relationship would continue until Christ’s return. At Pentecost we receive the answer.



Jesus promised his Apostles that he would not leave them, and at Pentecost, God shows that He does not forget his promises. The Holy Spirit was given to the Apostles in order to establish Christ’s Church on earth, and since the Holy Spirit is present in the Church since this very first Pentecost, the Church remains the principal means through which Christ is present in the world. The Church continues Christ’s mission on earth, and in this way, she is a sacrament of salvation—the sign and instrument of the communion of God and men.

Peter's Authority

Like Jesus, Peter taught with authority. His subject was the restoration of the kingdom: Jesus, Peter said, fulfilled the promise God made to restore the kingdom of David. Later, we will study his sermon in more detail, when we look at how the Church continues the Davidic kingdom. Right now it is most important to notice how Peter has inherited the teaching authority of Jesus.

Now when they had heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?" And Peter said to them, "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." (Acts 2: 37-38)

When the people ask what to do, Peter—like Jesus before him—has the answer. About three thousand believed and were baptized that day, Luke tells us. "And they held steadfastly to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers."



"...at that gate of the Temple which is called Beautiful to ask alms of those who entered..." (Acts 3:2)

Already, less than two months after the Resurrection, there was a church of about three thousand Christians in Jerusalem. They celebrated the Eucharist, listened to the teaching of the apostles, and shared everything they owned, so that no one was rich or poor among them.

They also continued to worship at the Temple. One day a lame beggar at the Temple gate asked Peter for some change.

But Peter said, "I have no silver and gold, but I give you what I have: in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise and walk." And he took him by the right hand and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. (Acts 3: 6-7)

Peter received the power to heal from Jesus, too. Jesus had held nothing back from his apostles. Seeing the crowds gathering around him, Peter once again taught them the Good News—this time right at the gate of the Temple.

The chief priests and other authorities had the apostles arrested. It was too late, of course: by the end of the day there were about five thousand Christians in Jerusalem.

They were brought before the Sanhedrin and, the apostles once again answered through Peter.

And when they had set them in their midst, they inquired, "By what power or by what name did you do this?" Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders, if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a cripple, by what means this man has been healed, be it known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by him this man is standing before you well." (Acts 4: 7-10)

The chief priests knew that Peter and John were "uneducated, common men," but here was an ordinary fisherman assuming the authority to teach the teachers! Yet they could do nothing against the apostles. The man who had been healed was standing right beside them on his own two feet. Thousands of people had seen him. If the authorities arrested the Twelve, there might be a riot; so they let them go with a warning.

Throughout these early days of the Church, we see that the power and authority of Jesus to heal and to teach have been given completely to the apostles. Peter is always their leader. When one couple tried to cheat the Church, it was Peter who pronounced God's sentence on them (see Acts 5: 1-11).

The apostles all worked miracles and taught the people, but it was Peter—by their common consent—who made the important decisions.

The Kingdom of heaven was inaugurated on earth by Christ. “This kingdom shone out before men in the word, in the works and in the presence of Christ” (LG 5). The Church is the seed and beginning of this kingdom. Her keys are entrusted to Peter. (CCC 567)

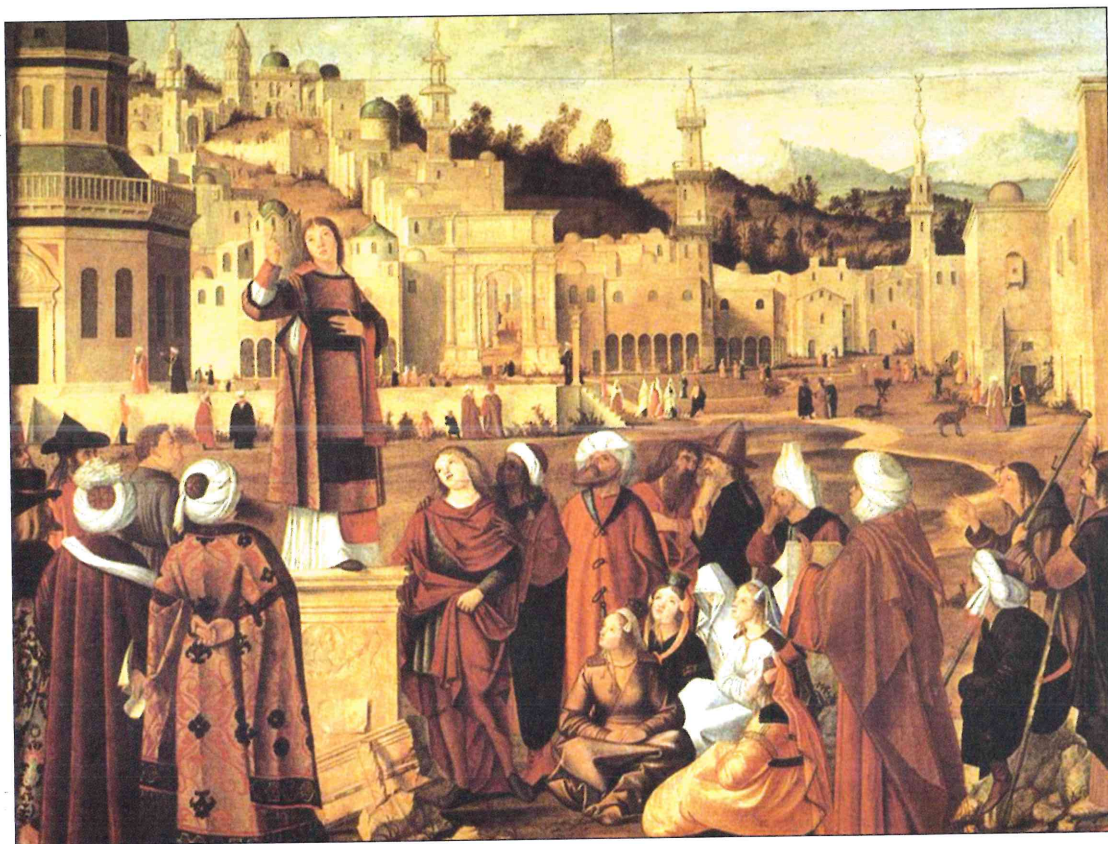
The Martyrdom Of Stephen

As time went on, the Apostles came to be quite popular in Jerusalem. Just as they had done with Jesus, the crowds lined up just to see them, or to bring their sick for Peter to heal.

The Temple authorities had thought they would stamp out the Jesus sect by killing Jesus, but Luke tells us (Acts 5: 13) that “great numbers of men and women” were joining the movement (which they called “the Way”) all the time.

The high priest and the Sadducees finally threw the Apostles in jail, but the Apostles miraculously escaped. Brought before the Sanhedrin (without force, Luke tells us, for fear of starting a riot), they refused to stop teaching in Jesus’ name.

Baffled by the Apostles’ stubbornness, the court had them whipped and released with orders to stop preaching—orders the Apostles immediately disregarded.



“But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into the heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God;...” (Acts 7: 55)

Finally Stephen, a convert who had been making a reputation both by his teaching and by his miracles, offended some powerful people by out-arguing them at a public debate (Acts 6: 9-10). They had their revenge by accusing him of blasphemy.



“And Stephen, full of grace and power, did great wonders and signs among the people.” (Acts 6: 8)

When he was given a chance to defend himself, Stephen made a long speech which is recorded in Acts 7. He told the court how the coming of the Christ had been predicted all the way through the Old Testament. Then he went on to provide the court with all the evidence it needed against him. “Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God.”

That was it. It was blasphemy. The court turned into a mob. Without even bothering to convict him, they rushed Stephen out of the city and stoned him after they placed their garments at the foot of a man named Saul. Two years after the Resurrection, Stephen had become the first Christian martyr.

That incident gave the authorities the excuse they needed. They determined to wipe out the Jesus cult by any means necessary. Saul himself headed a brutal squad of temple guards who burst suddenly into Christians’ homes and hauled whole families off to prison (Acts 8: 3).

At first, the persecution seemed to be working. Christians fled from Jerusalem until only the Apostles themselves were left. But they didn’t lose their faith. Instead of destroying the Jesus cult, the persecution spread it all over Judea and Samaria, and even farther to nearby cities like Damascus.

What The Early Christian Community Was Like

From the beginning, the Eucharist was what set the Christians apart as Christians. The first Christians went to the Temple every day, and then celebrated the Eucharist in their homes. They knew they had been given an important new truth about God’s plan of salvation, but they didn’t believe they were starting a new religion.

As the Good News spread beyond Jerusalem, Christians still thought of themselves as followers of the Jewish religion. The Apostles always went to the synagogue every Sabbath, and Christians were still going to synagogues almost half a century after Jesus’ resurrection. Only after the destruction of the Temple did the Jewish leaders finally expel the Christians.

So the early Christians worshiped in two ways: by going to the Synagogue every Sabbath, and then on the first day of the week, Sunday, by meeting in private homes to celebrate the Eucharist. Long after they were banned from the synagogues, Christians still kept the Eucharist as a separate, private worship for the baptized only.

Our Mass today still preserves the memory of those earliest times. The Liturgy of the Word—the first part of the Mass—comes from the old synagogue liturgy. The Eucharist—the second part of our Mass—comes from the old Temple liturgy of the thank offering and the Passover. In the Christian Mass, the liturgies of the synagogue and the Temple are united.

SUPPLEMENTARY READING

John Chrysostom, *Homily on Acts no. 7*

“Now when they heard these words, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the Apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?”

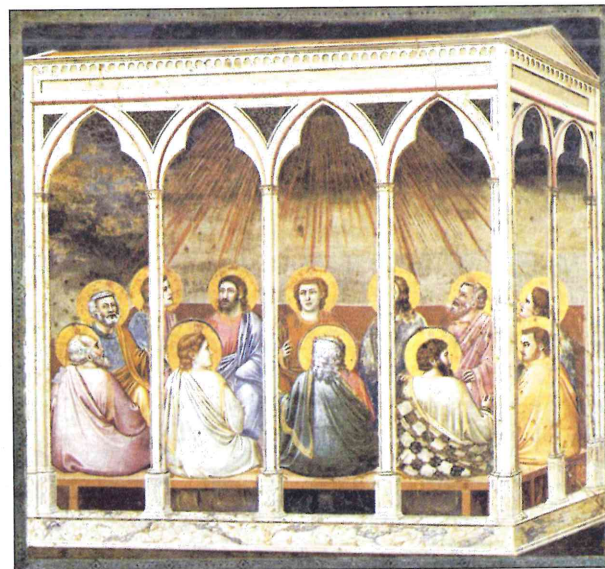
Do you see what a great thing gentleness is? More than any vehemence, it pricks our hearts, inflicts a keener wound. For as in the case of bodies which have become callous the man that strikes upon them does not affect the sense so powerfully, but if he first mollify them and make them tender, then he pierces them effectually; so in this instance also, it is necessary first to mollify. But that which softens, is not wrath, not vehement accusation, not personal abuse; it is gentleness. The former indeed rather aggravate the callousness, this last alone removes it.

If then you are desirous to reprove any delinquent, approach him with all possible mildness. For see here; he gently reminds them of the outrages they have committed, adding no comment; he declares the gift of God, he goes on to speak of the grace which bore testimony to the event, and so draws out his discourse to a still greater length. So they stood in awe of the gentleness of Peter, in that

he, speaking to men who had crucified his Master, and breathed murder against himself and his companions, discoursed to them in the character of an affectionate father and teacher. Not merely were they persuaded; they even condemned themselves, they came to a sense of their past behavior. For he gave no room for their anger to be roused, and darken their judgment, but by means of humility he dispersed, as it were, the mist and darkness of their indignation, and then pointed out to them the daring outrage they had committed. For so it is; when we say of ourselves that we are injured, the opposite party endeavor to prove that they have not done the injury; but when we say, we have not been injured, but have rather done the wrong, the others take the contrary line.

If, therefore, you wish to place your enemy in the wrong, beware of accusing him; nay, plead for him, he will be sure to find himself guilty. There is a natural spirit of opposition in man.

Such was the conduct of Peter. He did not accuse them harshly; on the contrary, he almost endeavored to plead for them, as far as was possible. And this was the very reason that he penetrated into their souls.



VOCABULARY

BISHOP

The Greek word means, literally, “overseer.” A successor of the apostles as a teacher, leader, and shepherd of the Church.

HOLY SPIRIT

The third person of the Trinity. Jesus promised his followers the Holy Spirit to guide and protect them after he ascended to his Father. That promise was fulfilled ten days later at Pentecost. God the Holy Spirit continues to guide and protect the Church today.

MASS

The Church’s most important liturgy. From the Latin “*Ite missa est*” at the end of the Mass.

MATTHIAS

The disciple chosen to replace Judas as one of the Twelve.

MINISTER

A servant; in particular, the servant of a king.

PENTECOST

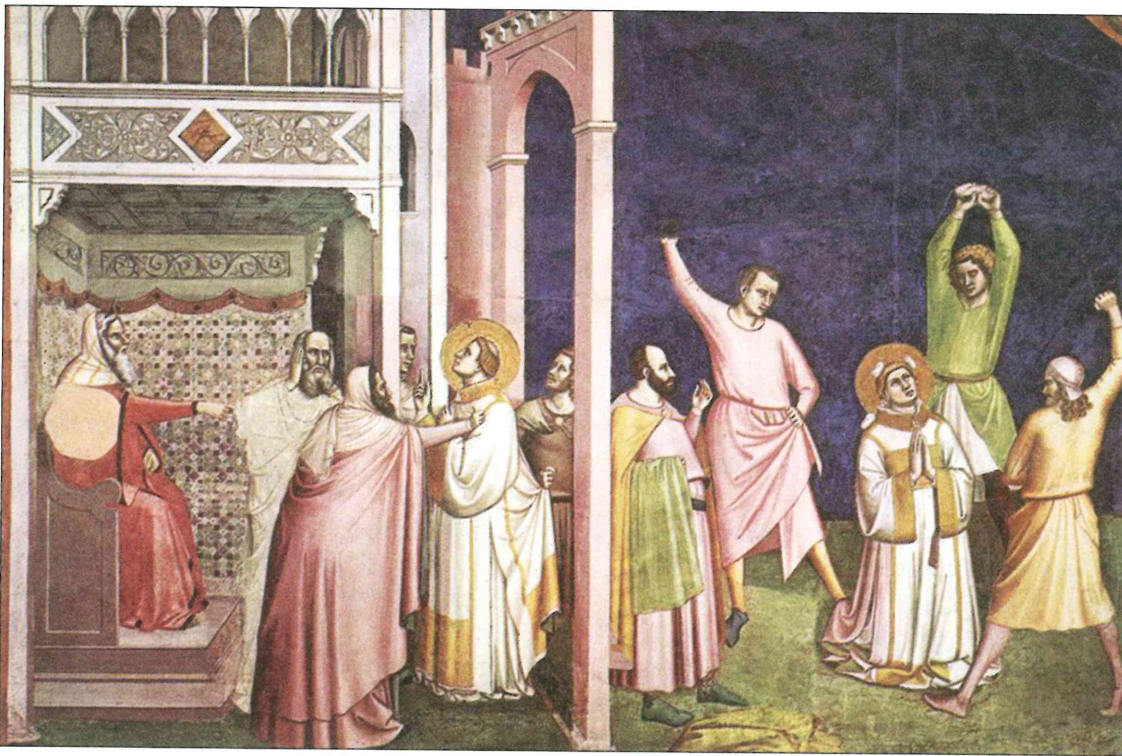
A Jewish festival, fifty days after Passover, celebrating the giving of the Law to Moses at Sinai. Also the birthday of the Church. On the Pentecost after Jesus’ resurrection, the Holy Spirit descended on the Twelve and Mary.

STEPHEN

The first Christian martyr. A popular deacon whose death marked the first wave of persecution against Christians.

UPPER ROOM

The room where Jesus celebrated the Last Supper. The locked gathering place for the first Christians before Pentecost. One of the first Christian churches.



“Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him; and the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul....he knelt down and cried with a loud voice, ‘Lord, do not hold this sin against them.’” (Acts 7: 58)

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What mission did Jesus give the apostles?
2. How large is the Kingdom?
3. What were the apostles waiting for after Jesus ascended into heaven?
4. Who called the disciples to replace Judas?
5. Who was chosen to fill Judas' place as the twelfth apostle?
6. Who are the successors of the apostles today?
7. What historical event did the Jews celebrate at Pentecost?
8. Why were Jews from many different nations able to hear the apostles in their own languages?
9. How did some of the Jewish people react when they found out the apostles were speaking so many different languages?
10. Which apostle acted as leader of the Twelve?
11. What miracle did Peter work at the gates of the Temple?
12. What was St. Stephen accused of after out-arguing his adversaries?
13. What was the outcome of St. Stephen's trial?
14. Who persecuted the Jewish people who became Christian?
15. How did early Christians worship?
16. How do the parts of the Mass reflect the way the early Christians worshiped?

PRACTICAL EXERCISES

1. On the feast of Pentecost, the twelve apostles were baptized in fire and the Holy Spirit. Why is this event seen as the birth of the Church? At this point, who was the Church made up of? What was so important about the Twelve receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit?
2. Christ left the apostles with a mission to restore the kingdom of Israel and then extend it to the end of the world. As representatives of the twelve united tribes of Israel, it was important that the eleven apostles choose someone to replace Judas, who had betrayed Jesus and then taken his own life. Why was it important that Peter was the one who decided to choose another apostle? How does this decision display his role as the Vicar of Christ? Who is the present day successor of Peter and heir to all the authority Christ gave him?
3. "But they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he spoke" (Acts 6:10). Before and during his martyrdom, St. Stephen, the first martyr, was filled with the Holy Spirit. How could the early Church be sure of this fact? How would God's grace and the Holy Spirit have been present in Stephen's preaching and his address to the Sanhedrin? How would Stephen's strength in the face of martyrdom have been a sign of the Holy Spirit's presence?

FROM THE CATECHISM

553 Jesus entrusted a specific authority to Peter: “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Mt 16:19). The “power of the keys” designates authority to govern the house of God, which is the Church. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, confirmed this mandate after his Resurrection: “Feed my sheep” (Jn 21:15-17; cf. 10:11). The power to “bind and loose” connotes the authority to absolve sins, to pronounce doctrinal judgments, and to make disciplinary decisions in the Church. Jesus entrusted this authority to the Church through the ministry of the apostles (cf. Mt 18:18) and in particular through the ministry of Peter, the only one to whom he specifically entrusted the keys of the kingdom.

738 Thus the Church’s mission is not an addition to that of Christ and the Holy Spirit, but is its sacrament: in her whole being and in all her members, the Church is sent to announce, bear witness, make present, and spread the mystery of the communion of the Holy Trinity:

All of us who have received one and the same Spirit, that is, the Holy Spirit, are in a sense blended together with one another and with God. For if Christ, together with the Father’s and his own Spirit, comes to dwell in each of us, though we are many, still the Spirit is one and undivided. He binds together the spirits of each and every one of us, and makes all appear as one in him. For just as the power of Christ’s sacred flesh unites those in whom it dwells into one body, I think that in the same way the one and undivided Spirit of God, who dwells in all, leads all into spiritual unity (St. Cyril of Alexandria, *In Jo. ev.*, 11, 11: PG 74, 561).

763 It was the Son’s task to accomplish the Father’s plan of salvation in the fullness of time. Its accomplishment was the reason

for his being sent (cf. LG 3; *Ad gentes* 3).

“The Lord Jesus inaugurated his Church by preaching the Good News, that is, the coming of the Reign of God, promised over the ages in the scriptures” (LG 5). To fulfill the Father’s will, Christ ushered in the Kingdom of heaven on earth. The Church “is the Reign of Christ already present in mystery” (LG 3).

1345 As early as the second century we have the witness of St. Justin Martyr for the basic lines of the order of the Eucharistic celebration. They have stayed the same until our own day for all the great liturgical families. St. Justin wrote to the pagan emperor Antoninus Pius (138-161) around the year 155, explaining what Christians did:

- On the day we call the day of the sun, all who dwell in the city or country gather in the same place.
- The memoirs of the apostles and the writings of the prophets are read, as much as time permits.
- When the reader has finished, he who presides over those gathered admonishes and challenges them to imitate these beautiful things.
- Then we all rise together and offer prayers* for ourselves . . . and for all others, wherever they may be, so that we may be found righteous by our life and actions, and faithful to the commandments, so as to obtain eternal salvation.
- When the prayers are concluded we exchange the kiss.
- Then someone brings bread and a cup of water and wine mixed together to him who presides over the brethren.
- He takes them and offers praise and glory to the Father of the universe, through the name of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and for a considerable time he gives thanks (in Greek: *eucharistian*) that we have been judged worthy of these gifts.
- When he has concluded the prayers and thanksgivings, all present give voice to an acclamation by saying: ‘Amen.’

FROM THE CATECHISM *continued*

— When he who presides has given thanks and the people have responded, those whom we call deacons give to those present the “eucharisted” bread, wine and water and take them to those who are absent (St. Justin, *Apol.* 1, 65-67: PG 6, 428-429; the text from before the asterisk [*] is from chap. 67).

1346 The liturgy of the Eucharist unfolds according to a fundamental structure which has been preserved throughout the centuries down to our own day. It displays two great parts that form a fundamental unity:

- the gathering, the liturgy of the Word, with readings, homily and general intercessions;
- the liturgy of the Eucharist, with the presentation of the bread and wine, the consecratory thanksgiving, and communion.

The liturgy of the Word and liturgy of the Eucharist together form “one single act of worship” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* 56); the Eucharistic table set for us is the table both of the Word of God and of the Body of the Lord (cf. DV 21).

1831 The seven *gifts* of the Holy Spirit are wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord. They belong in their fullness to Christ, Son of David (cf. Is 11:1-2). They complete and perfect the virtues of those who receive them. They make the faithful docile in readily obeying divine inspirations.

Let your good spirit lead me on a level path (Ps 143:10).

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God... If children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ (Rom 8:14, 17).

1832 The *fruits* of the Spirit are perfections that the Holy Spirit forms in us as the first fruits of eternal glory. The tradition of the Church lists twelve of them: “charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control, chastity” (Gal 5: 22-23 [Vulg.]).

2473 *Martyrdom* is the supreme witness given to the truth of the faith: it means bearing witness even unto death. The martyr bears witness to Christ who died and rose, to whom he is united by charity. He bears witness to the truth of the faith and of Christian doctrine. He endures death through an act of fortitude. “Let me become the food of the beasts, through whom it will be given me to reach God” (St. Ignatius of Antioch, *Ad Rom.* 4, 1: SCh 10, 110).

2624 In the first community of Jerusalem, believers “devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and the prayers” (Acts 2: 42). This sequence is characteristic of the Church’s prayer: founded on the apostolic faith; authenticated by charity; nourished in the Eucharist.



St. Stephen's Gate, also called the Lions' Gate, on the east side of the city wall is identified by Christians as the site near the traditional place of St. Stephen's martyrdom. There are also two churches built in Jerusalem as memorials to Stephen.

Endnotes

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| 1. Lk 3: 16. | 3. Acts 1: 9. |
| 2. Acts 1: 3. | 4. Mk 16: 19. |