

Our Lady's Catechists

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Part 1

Number 1

INTRODUCTION

St. Luke is the author of the Acts of the Apostles ... The first words "In my earlier works..." refer to his Gospel which you may have already studied.

The Acts of the Apostles is the book which gives an account of the growth of the Church in its first years, and, particularly, of the work of St. Peter and St. Paul.

The Apostles obeyed Our Lord's command to go and teach all nations and to baptise them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Theophilus for whom both books were written was probably a friend of St. Luke's; but as the name means "Lover of God" or "Dear to God ", it may stand for any Christian.

It can be said of the Acts of the Apostles that it is full of exciting events such as earthquakes, a shipwreck, false accusations, plots to murder, miracles, adventures up and down the road.

Read it for yourself and see.

Nihil obstat: Arturus Phelps, Censor Deputatus
Imprimatur ✠ JOANNES HENKICUS, Archiepiscopus Episcopus Portus Magni.
Wintoniae 17a Aprilis, 1959

Our Lady's Catechists

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Part 1

Number 2

FIRST CHAPTER

READ Verses 2-26

READ Verses 2-5: pause to think about how Our Lord, during the forty days after His Resurrection spent much time with the Apostles, teaching them about their work in setting up the Catholic Church, His Kingdom upon earth.

READ Verses 6-8: consider how the Apostles still thought that this Kingdom was to be a great one as the world counts greatness, with the Romans cast out, and the Jewish nation a glorious and mighty one again. They needed the Holy Spirit to show them the truth.

READ Verses 9 - 14 : this wonderfully vivid account of the Ascension. A Sabbath day's journey was about five-eighths of a mile, the distance Jews were allowed to walk on the Sabbath. The upper room to which the Apostles returned is believed to be that in which the Last Supper had taken place.

READ Verses 15-26: One of the disciples was chosen to take the place of Judas. Notice that, though Our Lady was there, she took no active part in the proceedings. This is the last time she is mentioned by name in the New Testament. We should think of, and try to imitate, her humble silence.

QUESTIONS

1. How did Our Lord prove that He was really alive after His Resurrection? (The Gospel will help you to give a full answer).

2. When and where were the Apostles to begin their preaching?

3. After two thousand years the Gospel still needs to be taken "to the ends of the earth." How can we share in this most important work?

4. What reminder did the Angels give the Apostles after the Ascension?

5. Why was it Peter who spoke about replacing Judas?

6. What were the two points of importance in making the right choice mentioned by Peter?

7. How did the Apostles ensure that the right man was chosen?

8. How many persons were present in the Upper Room?

9. How did they spend their time?

READ: CATECHISM of the CATHOLIC CHURCH PARAGRAPH 682

Fill in the missing words.

When he comes at the end of time to _____ the living and the dead, the glorious _____ will reveal the secret disposition of _____ and will render to each man according to his _____, and according to his _____ or refusal of grace.

Christ works acceptance judge hearts

Our Lady's Catechists

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Part 1

Number 3.

SECOND CHAPTER

Verses 1-36

The Coming of the Holy Spirit

Read verses 1-4: Pentecost is a Greek word meaning fiftieth. It was used for the great Jewish feast kept on the fiftieth day after the Passover, as a kind of harvest festival. It was one of the occasions when all Jewish men were expected to be present at the Temple sacrifices, so there were large numbers of strangers in Jerusalem.

The name Pentecost is now used for the Christian commemoration of the coming of the Holy Spirit. It used to be known in England as Whitsunday or "White Sunday," because it was one of the great baptism days, when white robes were worn by the newly baptised. It is considered to be the Birth of the Church

The disciples, of course, already had the Holy Spirit; but He came in this special way to fill them with the fire of love, and with courage and strength to face the difficulties before them.

The strong wind was a sign of the power, energy and speed of the spread of the Church.

READ Verses 5 - 13: Galileans, from the north of Palestine, had an accent of their own, as most country people have everywhere. You will remember that St. Peter was recognised as a Galilean just before he denied Our Lord. If you have an atlas, you will find it interesting to look for the countries named here, some of which still have the same names, and are often in the news.

Parthians and Medes - Persia or Iran; Elamites - N.W. of the Persian Gulf; Mesopotamia - Iraq; Cappadocia - S.E. Turkey; Pontus - Northern Turkey by the Black Sea; Asia - Western Turkey; Phrygia and Pamphylia - parts of modern Turkey.

READ Verses 14-36: St. Peter's first sermon gives an explanation of the things the crowds were wondering at, and an outline of the life, death and resurrection of Our Saviour as God's wonderful plan for our redemption.

QUESTIONS

1. What does the word 'Pentecost mean?

2. What was the meaning of the wind and the fire which were the outward signs of His coming?

3. Why do you think the "gift of tongues" spoken of in verse 4 was necessary for the Apostles?

4. What made the mockers say the Apostles were drunk, though it was morning?

5. How many persons of the Blessed Trinity were named by St. Peter in the sermon?

READ: CCC PARAGRAPH 733-736

Write a few words explaining the mission of the Holy Spirit. Why did it come to the Apostles and to us?

Our Lady's Catechists

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Part 1

Number 4

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

SECOND CHAPTER

Verses 37-47

READ verses 37-43. Thousands of souls were immediately converted as a result of Peter's first sermon. We are told how the newly baptised began to live in great fervour.

"The breaking of bread" was what we now call the Mass. During the time of persecution in England, one of the ways in which a priest could make himself known to the faithful was by breaking a piece of bread.

"The fixed times of prayer" were those of the Temple, for it must be remembered that all the first Christians were Jews, and they had no reason to give up their religious practices. Their religion was true, but, till the coming of Our Lord, imperfect. Jesus came, as He said, not to destroy, but to fulfil.

READ: *Verses 44 - 47*. The 'sharing' of the faithful was by their own choice, not by command. It was one way of showing that they understood Our Lord's words: "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

QUESTIONS

1. How many people received the gift of Faith on the day of Pentecost?

2. What were they told to do?

3. How did they afterwards pass their days?

4. Why was the New Sacrifice offered in various houses?

5. For what reason did the first Christians share all they had?

CATECHISM

(Answer from memory if you can)

What is Faith? (CCC paragraph 26)

What did Jesus command his disciples to do as a memorial of his Sacrifice? (CCC paragraph 1337)

Describe in your own words, what is the Holy Mass.

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Part 1

Number 5

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

THIRD CHAPTER

Verses 1-26

In this short chapter we read of the first miracle worked by St. Peter.

It is possible to imagine that Jesus had often passed by the lame man, and had not cured him, because he intended to do so through St. Peter. In this way more souls would be brought to belief in him after his Death.

Solomon's Porch was a long shelter along the eastern wall of the Temple enclosure. It was supported by marble pillars, and faced toward the Sanctuary. It was one of the places for teaching, and it was probably there that Jesus had been found as a young boy after being missing for three day's loss. Jesus Himself often preached there.

QUESTIONS

1. Which two Apostles went to the Temple?

2. Why were they going there?

3. How long had the man they cured been lame?

4. Why did he look so earnestly at the Apostles?

5. In whose name did St. Peter work the miracle?

6. What made the people gather round?

7. What did St. Peter say about the miracle?

8. How did he recall the Passion of Our Lord?

9. Why did St. Peter say: "It is to you first of all."?

Read: St Luke Chapter 24 and answer:

10. How do St. Peter's words recall those spoken by Jesus to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus *l*

CATECHISM

Though you may already know these answers, read the paragraphs in the CCC before completing this section.

Fill in the blanks:

Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is _____ Lord, and you shall; love the Lord your God will all your _____ and with all your _____ and with all your _____. (CCC 201)

The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are known as the Holy _____ (CCC258)

God the Son took the nature of man, “The Word was made flesh”

What is the word we use to describe this? (CCC 461)

Our Lady's Catechists

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Part 1

Number 6.

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

FOURTH CHAPTER

Verses 1-37

READ: Verses 1 - 12. These verses tell us of the Apostles' arrest, and of their being brought before the Council. These were the same men who had hated Jesus and given Him an unjust trial. Notice how they are given courage and wisdom that now helps them proclaim the Christ.

READ: Verses 13 - 22. The difficulty caused to the Council by the miracle. We see the fulfilment of Our Lord's words (St. Luke 12) concerning appearance before magistrates.

Apparently they were given a warning, because their law did not allow for imprisonment on the first offence.

Notice the reluctance of the priests to utter the Holy Name.

READ: Verses 23-31 The Apostles set free. The prayer of the infant Church.

READ: Verses 32-37. These recall what was told in Chapter 2 about the love and generosity among the faithful.

Notice the name of Barnabas; you will read much more about him later on.

QUESTIONS

1. Give two reasons for the authorities' anger at the Apostles' teaching.

2. By whose power did St. Peter answer boldly and well?

3. In St. Luke's Gospel, Chapter 20, Our Lord had spoken of the rejected corner-stone. Write St. Peter's words recalling those of Jesus. (V. 11)

4. How did the Council decide to deal with the Apostles?

5. How did Peter and John respond to the threats?

6. In what circumstances might we ourselves be obliged to disobey the civil authorities?

7. For what did the faithful pray after the Apostles' release?

8. What sign was given that their prayer was heard?

9. What great miraculous event has always been preached by the Church since apostolic times?

St. Thomas More, the great martyr under Henry VIII, declared: "I am the King's good servant, but God's first." That is the attitude of all martyrs, and must be ours also, with God's help.

You will often read in this book "They were all filled with the Holy Spirit." This means that there was a constant re-kindling of the fervour and zeal which the Holy Spirit had given them.

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Part 1

Number 7.

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

FIFTH CHAPTER

Verses 1 - 42

READ: Verses 1 - 11. The first public sin, and its severe punishment. Its main purpose seems to be to show St Peter's prophetic powers in addition to the sin of avarice which caused the couple to lie to the Apostles and so to the Holy Spirit.

(Note: In hot countries, burial has to take place very soon after death).

READ: Verses 12 - 16. The wonderful miracles worked by the Apostles. Our Lord had promised that they would be given power to work even greater miracles than His own.

READ: Verses 17-21. The second arrest of the Apostles, and their release by an angel. They are told to give the people "the message of true life." The purpose of the Christian message is the Salvation and life for all those who call upon the name of the Lord.

READ: Verses 22-32. The second appearance of the Apostles before the Council.

READ: Verses 33-42. Here we hear the advice given by Gamaliel, a Pharisee and teacher of St Paul. He belonged to the school of Hillel who believed in a more humane law. The result is freedom for the Apostles.

Notice the reason for the Apostles rejoicing.

CATECHISM

What is grace? (CCC 1996-8)

How might we obtain God's grace? (CCC 2010, and 2027)

When do the Sacraments confer grace? (CCC 1127)

QUESTIONS

1. Were Ananias and Sapphira obliged to sell their land? Or to give all the money?

2. In what did their sin consist?

3. Why do you think they were punished so severely?

4. For what reason were the Apostles given great miraculous powers?

5. Do miracles still happen? For what reason?

6. Mention any place where you know miracles occur at the present time.

7. Why were the Apostles arrested again?

8. What were they told to do by the Angel who released them?

9. Which sacrament first gives us this "true life"?

10. Which sacrament nourishes it?

11. Why were the Apostles brought to the Council without violence?

12. Why was it hypocrisy for the high priest to say, "You are determined to lay this man's death at our door"?

13. What advice was given by the learned Gamaliel?

Our Lady's Catechists

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Part 1

Number 8.

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

SIXTH CHAPTER

Verses 1-15

READ: *Verses 1-6* how the Apostles found that they were spending too much time in relieving the poor. This is work that must always be done, so seven men were chosen to be responsible for it. They were later called deacons. At the present time, deacons can be either permanent deacons or those who are ordained in readiness for ordination to the priesthood.

READ *Verses 7-15* The progress of the Church, and the influence of Stephen, which roused the enmity of some Greek-speaking Jews.

The priests converted were not those of the highest rank, but of the twenty-four grades or courses who were on a rota for a fortnight's duty in Jerusalem. Zachary, the father of John the Baptist, was on the 8th course, and was on duty in the Temple when the Angel Gabriel appeared to him.

The freedmen referred to in verse 9 were the descendants of those who had formerly been slaves. They had a synagogue of their own. The inscription over its entrance was found in Jerusalem a few years ago.

QUESTIONS

1. What was the Apostles' proper work?

2. For what work were the 7 men chosen?

3. How were they ordained?

4. Give the names of the others six who were made deacons?

5. Why was Stephen arrested?

6. How did his trial resemble that of Our Lord?

CATECHISM

Name the corporal works of mercy, (CCC 2447)

Our Lady's Catechists

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Part 1

Number 9.

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

SEVENTH CHAPTER

Verses 2 - 59

READ verses 2-53. In this longer reading the verses are a summary of the early history of the Jews. Stephen proves the immense importance of God's promise to Abraham that one of his descendants would bring blessings to all nations. He points out that, as their forefathers had rebelled against Moses and rejected the prophets, they themselves had rejected Jesus, who was plainly the fulfilment of what Moses and the prophets had foretold.

Verse 48 means that God was not confined to the Temple; neither is He confined in our churches, though truly present there. Verse 49 gives the explanation.

READ in *Verses 54-59* of the rage of the Council, and the violence with which they hurried Stephen to death without waiting for sentence to be pronounced.

It is reasonable to suppose that the Roman Governor was absent, since the Romans had taken from the Jews the power to condemn anyone to death.

QUESTIONS

1. What special promise had God made to Abraham?

2. How did God fulfil this promise?

3. What did Our Lord do and say when He was close to Jerusalem on Palm Sunday? (St. Luke Ch. 19).

4. What was St. Stephen's vision?

5. How was St Stephen put to death?

6. How did he follow Our Lord's example in dying?

7. When do we keep St. Stephen's feast?

8. What part had Saul (Later, St Paul) in this murder?

CATECHISM

In a word, where is God? (268-269)

Where is Jesus Christ? (663 and 1377)

Our Lady's Catechists

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Part 1

Number 10.

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

EIGHTH CHAPTER

Verses 1-24

READ: Verses 1-3 Here we read of the first persecution of the Church, which caused many to leave Jerusalem, and thus helped the spread of the Gospel.

READ: Verses 4-13 about the preaching of the deacon Philip in Samaria, and the conversion of Simon, who had been a sorcerer.

READ: Verses 14-2. about the visit of Saints Peter and John, to give the sacrament of Confirmation. Being baptised, the converts had already received the Holy Spirit, who dwells in every soul in a state of grace. But Confirmation gives the fulness of the Holy Spirit, and in the first years of the Church this was often made visible by miraculous signs. This explains why Simon wished to buy the power.

TEST

Cross out what is incorrect.

When the Church is persecuted, Bishops must:—
try to escape,
remain at their post.

Philip could not give Confirmation because :—
he was not clever enough,
he was not a Bishop,
he had no holy oil.

Philip worked many miracles :—
to score off Simon,
through the power of God.
because the Apostles expected it.

QUESTIONS

1. Why did the two Apostles go to Samaria?

2. How had Simon become rich?

3. Why did he want to buy the Apostles' power?

4. How did he show repentance?

Simon gave his name to the sin of Simony, which is buying or selling spiritual things, forbidden by the First Commandment. Some non-Catholics think that we have to pay for absolution. If this were true, it would be the sin of:

Some non-Catholics think that indulgences have to be paid for. If this were true, it would be the sin of:

CATECHISM

Who gave the Catholic Church divine authority to teach? (2068)

Is Baptism necessary for salvation? (1257 see also 846)

What does Baptism do for the soul? (1227 and 1263)

Can we be baptised more than once? (1272)

Our Lady's Catechists

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Part 1

Number 11.

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

EIGHTH CHAPTER

Verses 25 - 40

READ in *Verses 25–28* how Philip was commanded to go to the Gaza road. The Ethiopian eunuch whom he met there was a proselyte, that is, a convert to the Jewish faith. He was a wealthy man, so we can imagine him with many servants, and probably some soldiers in his train, for his journey was a very long one. Ethiopia is the country now usually called Abyssinia.

The “book” was a roll of papyrus or parchment, not separate leaves bound together, like our books.

READ in Verses 29 – 35 The words of Philip and of the eunuch make it clear to us that the Bible is a book that needs explaining by the teachers Our Lord appointed.

READ: Verses 36 – 40 these verses tell us of the eunuch's baptism and Philip's being taken away. The Ethiopian must have given the "good tidings" to others when he reached home. It is certain that the Faith was received in that country in very early times.

QUESTIONS

1. Where was Philip told to go?

2. Why had the eunuch been to Jerusalem?

3. What was he doing when Philip saw him?

4. What did Philip ask him?

5. What was the answer?

6. Write two or three sentences you think Philip might have said.

7. "A certain water" would be a small oasis. When the eunuch saw it and asked for baptism, what was Philip's answer

8. Give the eunuch's confession of faith.

9. What made the eunuch rejoice, though Philip was taken away

10. Where did Philip go after this?
