



WEEK 7: ACTS 1-2

Scripture: Acts 1-2

Instructions: On the first day you pray with this guide, use the whole chapter for your prayer time. Then, highlight the sections, verses, or even phrases that strike you and spend subsequent days going more in-depth into those passages: why is God calling you to focus your attention there? Let these words sit with you even after your prayer time, and let God continue to speak to you through them throughout your day.

Reflection from Archbishop Aquila:

You can watch Archbishop's video reflections at archden.org/easter2021

This week, our last in our journey of prayer through Easter, is also the one exception. This week we focus on not one but two chapters, the first two of the book Acts of the Apostles, which capture the events of the Ascension through Pentecost.

“Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” (v. 6)

At first glance, this might seem like a misguided question from the apostles, another occasion where these followers of Christ have missed the mark altogether. We might wonder: are they still looking for a worldly kingdom, still? One filled with power and influence? No wonder Jesus rebuffs them right away.

In fact, this question is incredibly poignant and the right one for the apostles to be asking. Jesus himself began his entire public ministry proclaiming the coming of the Kingdom. As soon as he comes back from his temptation in the desert and begins his public ministry, he proclaims, “The kingdom of God is at hand!” (Mark 1:15) Jesus has made it clear that his whole journey, the teaching, healing, and even his Passion and Resurrection, has been about the establishment of the Kingdom. The apostles are right then to wonder, where is it? Christ has now died and risen, walked with them for forty days, but, still, where is the Kingdom that was promised?

Look closely at Jesus' answer to their question and you will see that his response holds the details of where the Kingdom is. "He answered them, 'It is not for you to know the times or seasons that the Father has established by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth,'" (Acts 1:7-8).

Read that again. It seems like he declines to answer their question, but does he really? I would argue that he has just changed their question slightly. They have asked him, "Are you going to at this time, right now, restore the Kingdom?" They are asking him a "when" question that he has a clear answer to, "It is not for you to know the times or seasons that the Father has established." He is saying that he will not tell them *when* he will establish the Kingdom. But he does tell them *how*.

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

He is saying to the apostles, "this is how I am going to establish the Kingdom. You are going to do it for me."

When the Holy Spirit "comes upon" the apostles in the Upper Room at the beginning of the second chapter of Acts, we typically celebrate that moment as the birth of the Church because, filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, the apostles spend the rest of the book Acts of the Apostles forming and founding the Church.

The Church, constructed around the hierarchical and sacramental gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, is the presence of the Kingdom of God, here on Earth, that had been promised by Christ from the beginning of his public ministry. As Catholics, you and I are citizens of that Kingdom. Importantly, this Kingdom has a purpose.

As has been discussed already in this resource, Christ had a clear mission from the Father. Christ said, back in the Bread of Life discourse, "This is the will of the one who sent me, that I should not lose anything of what he gave me, but that I should raise it [on] the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him may have eternal life" (John 6:39-40).

The Son has been sent for the salvation of the world, that all might experience life to the full, in Heaven and on Earth. But with Jesus ascending to the Father, how will he extend the Kingdom to every place in the world, in every age to come? How does everyone who will ever live, in every place that exists on Earth, encounter this life-saving, life-changing Good News?

The answer he chooses is clear and simple. “You will be my witnesses...to the ends of the Earth.” He sends a Church.

For coming up on two thousand years, the Church does much but has existed for a simple purpose. Pope Saint Paul VI in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, stated, “(The Church) exists in order to evangelize.” Put into contemporary words, at the pastoral center we have begun to affirm this mission by saying, “The Archdiocese of Denver exists so that, in Jesus Christ, all might be rescued and have abundant life, for the glory of the Father.”

Everything we do, every teaching and practice, every doctrine and devotion, is for the singular purpose of helping every person encounter and be transformed by the love of God for which they are made. This mission is first Christ’s, given to him by his Father, which he then entrusted to us, his Church.

Let us pray this week that the universal Church, and especially our local Church, would be stirred into flame so that it can be ever more dedicated to accomplishing this mission.