

Peter and the Call of the Gentiles

The work that is traditionally called “The Acts of the Apostles,” could really be called “The Acts of the Holy Spirit.” In this, his second volume, St. Luke continues to recount “all that Jesus did and taught,” but now he is recounting how Our Lord Jesus Christ accomplished his work through his Holy Spirit directing the Apostles and the early Church. How often do we read phrases such as “It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and ourselves” (*Acts* 15:28); “they had been prevented by the Holy Spirit from preaching the message in the province of Asia... they tried to go into the Bithynia but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them” (*Acts* 16:6-7).

We must bear in mind that St. Luke is not only recording these and other events to show us how the life of Christ was continued in the early Church, but also alerting us and giving us a model of the manner in which the Holy Spirit continues that life in every generation of the Church. We see an example of that guidance in the life of Peter, the leader of the Apostles, as he is instructed prophetically to move the Church “out into the deep,” by including Gentiles in what was up to that moment a Jewish movement.

It suffices to read the Old Testament, particularly the psalms, to appreciate that, at the heart of the Jewish faith there was an awareness that God cared about everyone and was planning to call all the nations to join themselves somehow to the privileges of the Chosen People. Thus we read in *Psalms* 86: 8-10:

There is none like you among the gods, my Lord,