Week Forty-Eight

Days 330–336



# THE BIBLE IN A YEAR

WITH FR. MIKE SCHMITZ

**The Church** Narrative: Acts 9–15 | Supplemental: Romans 15–16; 1 Corinthians 1–12; Proverbs 27:18–28:12

## PETER AND PAUL ARE ROLE MODELS FOR TODAY



*Saint Peter and Saint Paul*
by Jusepe de Ribera

The readings this week begin to showcase the explosion of the Church into the world. We read about the inclusion of the Gentiles into the Church through the testimony of St. Peter. Perhaps even more surprising, we read about St. Paul's acceptance of Christ after persecuting the Church. The book of Acts and his own letters show St. Paul to be a tireless and self-sacrificial missionary for the Church among the Gentiles. This week's readings also give us insight into the way God leads the Church. When the community is divided about the inclusion of Gentiles in the Church, God uses the Council of Jerusalem to settle the issue, prompting the Church to welcome Gentiles in without them needing to obey some Torah requirements, such as circumcision.

- In Acts 10, Peter has a vision in which the Lord tells him to eat food that is considered unclean under the kosher laws of the Old Testament. These laws have now been superseded by the Lord's expansion of his kingdom to the Gentiles.
- When Peter goes where the vision directs him, the Roman centurion Cornelius, a Gentile, has gathered his kinsmen and close friends in preparation for his preaching. As Peter preaches the Gospel, the Holy Spirit comes upon all gathered, and they begin speaking in tongues and praising God. Then, they are baptized.
- Accepting Gentiles into the Church and not requiring them to live by the Torah (the Law which God gave the Jews) was not something every Christian understood or initially accepted.
- Acts 15's description of the Council of Jerusalem provides early evidence of one important way the Church learned how to resolve questions and disputes, namely through councils.
- The authority of the Church, whether it be through the pope or through the pope's endorsement of a council, to resolve doctrinal questions that arise from disagreements between believers is a great blessing. It allows us to know with confidence what is required for salvation.
- St. Paul is like a father to the Corinthians because he founded the Church there. This is why he takes so much care trying to guide and correct those believers.

- After he leaves Corinth, though, division begins to set in. St. Paul addresses this dissension in 1 Corinthians 1, writing that these divisions go against the reason they came to know Jesus in the first place, which was through the power of the Cross.
- In 1 Corinthians 5:5, St. Paul also gives the Corinthians the remedy for a man who is publicly violating God's laws: "Deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." Here, we see the roots of excommunication as an extreme way of offering medicine to someone lost in sin.

## Dive Deeper

Reflect today on your specific role in the Church. In prayer, ask God to show you what gifts he has given you and how to use them for his glory and the building up of the Church.



**PETER'S VISION**

This seventeenth-century artwork by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld shows Peter's vision in Acts 10:9–16.

## Bible Answers

### When someone says he believes the Church suppresses women, how can I respond?

The Church upholds and restores the dignity of women, showing their true identity and calling in Christ. Yet many people think the Catholic Church suppresses women because women cannot be priests. Here are some tips on how to respond.

First, respond in love and speak only the truth. Many women feel they are not heard within the Church or that they have been treated poorly by men. Only love, together with truth, can help them see that the Church actually upholds the dignity of women. Second, explain that women do not need to be ordained to have an important role within the Church. Female saints did great things for the Church, using their gifts for the greater glory of God. Both men and women are made in the image of God and are equal in dignity, yet they have different roles within the Church. Third, show that the Catholic Church upholds the dignity of women more than any other religion. Indeed, the Church teaches that Mary is the highest of all creatures precisely because of her femininity—she conceived Jesus within her womb and became the Mother of God.

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