



### **From A Bishop's Journal (687)**

#### **Moved by the Spirit (3) "From Jerusalem to Rome"**

**T**he Church started with the first community in Jerusalem. How then can we explain that faith in the Risen Christ which gathered together the believers reached all the way into the Madawaska, Victoria, and Restigouche regions? Historians have written thousands of books on this; however, only one answer can be given to the question: It was the Risen Jesus who sent and continues to send his Spirit to all of humankind.

#### **Hymn of Praise**

The liturgy for the Apostles lets us in on the secret of these marvels of God. "They are together in the Father's house, the companions in trial who saw him crucified. You open the way. They walk in your footsteps, O Lord of the living. To bring light to the world, they carry in their hearts the glorious image of your humble glory. Messengers of hope, they sowe your word, and you are the harvest. They have a place at the banquet in the heavenly Kingdom, and share the cup of saving love. You show them the Father, much to their joy. O Jesus, Son of God!" And the same Office of the Apostles continues to share the divine secret: "Shaped by the Word of God, tried in the fire of the Passion and forever cured of all fear, Apostles of Jesus, you are the solid building stones of his Church. On you he still bases his work, and surrenders to you. He who is the architect and master builder becomes the cornerstone to uphold us, the living stone and daily bread for whoever proclaims and carries him. What pure and sober intoxication pushes you? What folly of love and fire? What wisdom more foolish than the wind? The Spirit breathes on you, men of the deep, give us a desire for God, and set us anew on our journey."

#### **A Bigger and Bigger Community**

On Pentecost, there were thousands of people around the Apostles. We only have to look at a map of the ancient world, to see where they came from: Parthians, Medes, and Elamites, from Mesopotamia, Judea, and Cappadocia, Pontus, the province of Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the regions of Lybia around Cyrene, and even visitors from Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs. A multitude of people witnessed the coming of the Holy Spirit, and they heard the apostle Peter proclaim the resurrection of Jesus who was sent by the Father, Peter who called them to conversion and baptism. That day, nearly three thousand people joined the disciples of Jesus. And the witness of this first community which was devoted to the apostles' instruction, the communal life, the breaking of the bread and the prayers, was their drawing card everywhere.

## **Events Develop Quickly**

The Acts of the Apostles, Saint Paul's Letters, and the Book of Revelation show us how quickly the Christian community developed despite problems and persecutions. The miracles worked by the Apostles, especially Peter's healing of the sick man, the arrest of the Apostles and Gamaliel's intervention, the institution of the Seven charged with the distribution of bread to the poor and the widows, and Stephen's martyrdom all helped spread the knowledge of the Risen Jesus. However, the so-called 'Joppa Event' is still considered today a conclusive argument: Is the salvation proclaimed by Jesus meant for the Jews only? Paul's conversion, his mission to the Gentiles, and the Council of Jerusalem, all these confirm that God's salvation is for all mankind.

## **To the Ends of the Earth**

Matthew's Gospel concludes with Jesus' instruction to his disciples: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations. Baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Teach them to carry out everything I have commanded you. And know that I am with you always, until the end of the world!" The Apostles courageously set to work, even laying down their lives for Christ. There is nothing to stop Paul: work, imprisonment, countless journeys, beatings and brushes with death, flogging, stoning, shipwreck, danger of drowning and of floods, danger of highwaymen and from his fellow-citizens, danger from the Gentiles, imperiled in the city, the desert, at sea, danger from false brothers, many labours and trials, etc. He founded communities at Corinth, Ephesus, Philippi, Galatia, Thessalonica, and visited the one in Rome, where he was beheaded around the year 67, three years after Peter's crucifixion in the Vatican burial ground.

## **Despite Persecutions**

Reading through the Book of Revelation, we come across other communities: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. The Apostle John sends a message of hope to these Christians persecuted for Christ. He presents them with the Risen Christ, the conqueror of sin and death: "There is a new heaven and a new earth. Come, Lord Jesus!"

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