

Sixteenth Week of Ordinary Time
July 21, 2024
Year of the Most Holy Eucharist
Reflection #30

*“And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in **breaking of bread**, and in prayers.” (Acts of the Apostles 2:42 KJV)*

*“And they continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and **breaking bread** from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,” (Acts of the Apostles 2:46 KJV)*

*“And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to **break bread**, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.”
(Acts of the Apostles 20:7 KJV)*

Last weekend we reflected upon Saint Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians chapter 11 verses 23-29. I mentioned Saint Paul wrote this letter around 53-54 AD stating that his letter reinforced those teachings of the apostolic church concerning the Body and Blood of Jesus and the necessary disposition required for its reception. I concluded stating we would now turn our gaze upon the Acts of the Apostles to see if it would offer any further information which may be used to either dismiss or collaborate our held belief that Jesus truly intended for His disciples to eat and drink His Body and Blood. As I have declared previously, we will use the King James Version of the New Testament to show our results as not being found solely in an approved “Roman Catholic” translation.

We must begin by first dating this valued work. It is believed that Saint Luke wrote his combined work, Gospel and Acts, after the year 70 AD. This date of 70 AD is important. The inhabitants of the city of Jerusalem have rebelled against their Roman authorities. Rome, sending her army, surrounds and slowly starves the city. Finally, Rome is able to overcome the weakened traitors and capture the city. Her vengeance would be brutal and culminate with the destruction of the Temple. This occurs in 70 AD. After this event, the Christian community would now live in a “post-Jerusalem” age or, as the Fathers of the Church would label it, the “time of the Gentiles.” Both the Gospel of Saint Luke and the Acts of the Apostles are addressed to Theophilus (Greek meaning “lover of God”). Acts of the Apostles will center upon the beginnings of the early “post-Pentecost” Christian community as she expresses her lived faith in Jesus as the Son of God.

I have chosen three verses, listed above, which shed light upon these first Christians and the communal life they now live. What we know, leading into these first examples, is the community of believers consists of those members who have received Baptism under the Trinitarian formula (Father, Son and Holy Ghost/Spirit). The life of the community centers upon a few things: the teachings of the Apostles, caring for others’ needs, prayers and the **breaking of the bread**. One may assume the statement “breaking of the bread” refers to a community meal, similar to a pot luck. They would not be completely wrong in this assumption. Before the establishment of churches, Christians would often come together to share a meal. Saint Paul would chastise his Christian converts for their behavior regarding the community meal which followed after the Lord’s Supper (First Corinthians 11:20-22). Saint Luke,

in using this term “breaking of the bread,” is actually referring to the Eucharist, the same Eucharist we celebrate today.

In his first account (Gospel of Saint Luke) of the life of the Christian church, Luke describes the scene of the Last Supper. It was here that Jesus spoke these fundamental words affirming what He stated in Saint John’s Gospel chapter 6. “*And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, ‘This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.’*” (Luke 22:19). When Saint Luke moves into his description of the post-Pentecost community, he writes that they are following exactly the instruction of Jesus at the Last Supper. They are gathering together, praying, listening to the teachings of the Apostles and breaking bread, i.e., partaking of the Body and Blood of Jesus. Whether it is at Jerusalem or Corinth, under the guidance of Saint Peter or Saint Paul, the first Christians BELIEVED the same thing — they were to celebrate the sacrifice of Jesus by gathering together to eat His Body and drink His Blood.

My dear family, the Apostles and those first Christian communities they established believed they were doing exactly what Jesus expected them to do. These passages from Saint Paul, last weekend, and Saint Luke, this weekend, are all from the Bible. I have listed the passages and offered an explanation. However, I believe this is still not enough. We must go outside of the Bible. We must read other sources, letters written by these first Christian disciples which are not present in Sacred Scripture, but revered nonetheless. They too shed light upon what Christians believed concerning the Eucharist. Did they also hold the Eucharist to be the real Body and Blood of Jesus given at the Last Supper? Or, did they believe the Apostles were mistaken and write that it was a man-made belief, nothing more than a symbolic representation?