

In this period of "Ordinary Time" we pray you will discover a new awareness of God's Word and God's love and presence in your lives through these reflections.



Our Lady of the Fields Church
Scriptural Review & Reflections
Saturday & Sunday August 12 & 13, 2017

For more information on any of the parish Faith Enrichment programs contact the Evangelization and Faith Formation Office & Staff or Dr. Little at tlittle@olfparish.com

Looking More Deeply into "God Has No Favorites"

In this study in the Acts of the Apostles, God opens Peter's eyes to see that in God's household there are many paths to Glory! Each one of us reading these notes have received our faith tradition and came to understand Jesus' message because someone brought the gospel to us or to our people whether recently or centuries ago and helped us to believe and live the Word.

The text says that Cornelius was a "God fearer" a Gentile who worshipped the God of Israel in the local synagogue but who had not yet been circumcised and, so, was not yet a full member of the Jewish community. Luke describes him as devout, a man of regular prayer and a seeker after God, generous with his money and caring for those in need. He had the respect, not only of his peers in the Roman army, but of his neighbors in the Jewish community.

Thus the Spirit urges Peter to open his eyes and observe what God is doing in Cornelius and his household. As they all speak in tongues, just as the apostles did on the day of Pentecost, Peter sees God's hand at work among them. They are the message which Peter and we are invited to remember - no matter what the sign, God is purposeful in the Spirit's actions among us. Peter and his companions (all Jewish circumcised men) must not assume that only those "like" them are in the favor of God. God is not deterred by our prejudice or lack of openness to the Spirit's actions. We must accept whomever the Spirit offers and regards as a fit vessel. As Peter learns then, and we today, "God has no favorites!"

The Acts of the Apostles: A Book for Disciples Ch 10: "What God has cleansed call not common!"

The Mosaic law contains a basic prohibition – Jews shall not mix with Gentiles! The New Testament writers, including Paul, are clear that the law was God's word to Israel and thus should be respected. But Paul and the other leaders are equally clear that, in the light of Jesus Christ, the law must be seen as God's word *for a particular period and a particular purpose.* This is the kind of shift in thinking that was happening to Peter as he went to Cornelius's house. In Jesus, the Messiah of Israel, God, has broken down the barrier between Jews and Gentiles, humiliating both categories (Jews because they apparently lost their historically privileged position; Gentiles because they now have to acknowledge a Jewish Messiah) in order to reveal God's mercy to each other.

So God gives Peter the opportunity to tell the story of Jesus to Cornelius and the others. Peter frames this message about Jesus and the story of Israel with two wide declarations. First, Jesus is Lord of everyone (10:36) and everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name (10:43). And as they accept this word the spirit falls on the believers in Caesarea in the same way as it happened in Jerusalem (Acts 2) and Samaria (Acts 8). Thus Peter's sees firsthand the obligation to share God's word with all people! No one is excluded.