

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 November 11 & 12, 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

Ephesus the Seat of Power and Unity among the believers!

This leg of Paul's journey involves a visit to Ephesus, clearly the leading political and economic powerhouse city in the area and, in fact, the third largest city in the Roman Empire with a population of at least 250,000 plus. Jews had been residents of the city since early Hellenistic time. And quite a number of Jews held Roman citizenship with a corresponding respect demonstrated by the Roman courts and government systems which upheld the Jews' civil and religious rights without question.

In the midst of this cosmopolitan area Paul encounters Ephesian "disciples" who claimed membership in the faith community but who denied any knowledge of the Holy Spirit. It is reminiscent of the testimony of Priscilla and Aquila's instruction of Apollos. Apollos had been instructed in the Lord and taught accurately about Jesus. He was an ardent, convert, however he knew only the baptism of John and needed to be taught more accurately about the Christian Way.

These 12 Ephesians whom Paul meets know only John's baptism and had not heard that there was a Holy Spirit. These descriptions of the Ephesian disciples hint at two interesting things about the emerging church's catechesis: 1. That the influence of John the Baptist was more powerful than was often credited; and 2. The consistent unity of belief and practice within the church was a struggle emerging from the early beginning. In light of this, Paul stays in Ephesus safeguarding the vitality and consistent preaching of the Word and to assure that "best practices" in the molding of their lives in the community's faith.

The Acts of the Apostles: A Book for Disciples: Acts Ch. 19: "The Clash of Powers in Ephesus"

Paul had spent a day or two in each of the Galatian churches. He had stayed a few days in Philippi, a few weeks in Thessalonica, a day or two in Beria, a few days in Athens. Then he settled for 18 months in Corinth. Now, as a kind of climax to his work, he finds himself in one of the major Mediterranean centers of the world, Ephesus. It is a great city at the hub of the world's trade routes, full of culture, money, temples, politics, military, merchants, slaves, and **POWER!**

Everything we know about Ephesus indicates that it was a place where not only social and civic power but also religious and spiritual powers were concentrated. Perhaps that is why Luke begins this account of Paul's work there with a story about a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit. There must be nothing "second handed" or less than complete about the Spirit's power when you face the overwhelming powers of the world.

Not only had the people of Ephesus not received the Holy Spirit; they had not yet heard that there is a Holy Spirit freely available for all who trust in Jesus. Nor did they understand that Jesus was not just a follower or successor of the baptizer. Paul announced Jesus as the decisive person to whom John had been pointing. The Ephesians were awaiting a full Christian baptism and, with it, the Holy Spirit. Luke is using this tale to introduce Paul's work in Ephesus and showing that from the very beginning, he was concerned with the spirit's power in the lives of individuals and in the wider community.

Paul finds himself in Ephesus at the center of "power": Magic, Political, Religious, Pagan power. Now he brings an unknown power the name of "Jesus the Lord" stronger than them all!