

Acts 10:34-43ⁱⁱ

Then Peter began to speak to them: "I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all. That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

ⁱⁱ About the First (or Alternate Second) Reading: Acts 10:34-43

Today's reading gives a selection from Peter's missionary speech to Cornelius, a Gentile centurion, and his household. The conversion of Cornelius marks an important turning point in the understanding of God as impartial and consequently the outreach of the Church to Gentiles. Many "circumcised believers" (11:2) rejected and feared the possible inclusion of Gentiles in the Church, but Luke makes clear that Peter himself (even before Paul) began the mission to the Gentiles under the direction of the Holy Spirit (1:8) because his idea of God had changed.

Cornelius was a "God-fearing man" (10:2, 22); that is, a Gentile who worshiped Israel's God but had not adopted all of the Jewish religious practices. Peter's sermon summarizes the basic preaching of the early Church. God anointed Jesus as Messiah "with the Holy Spirit and power" for a ministry of "doing good and healing" (10:38). God's saving action in Jesus is supported by apostolic witness (10:39, 41) and scriptural proof (10:43), issuing in a call to conversion. Along with the apostles, all those who celebrate the eucharist on Easter Day are witnesses to Jesus' resurrection.