

Acts 10:44-48ⁱⁱ

While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the word. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles, for they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter said, "Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" So he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they invited him to stay for several days.

ⁱⁱ About the First Reading: Acts 10:44-48

This missionary speech in today's reading marks an important turning point in the outreach of the early Church. Many Jewish Christians feared and resisted the possible inclusion of Gentiles, but Luke makes clear that Peter himself (even before Paul) began the mission to the Gentiles under the direction of the Holy Spirit.

Cornelius was a "God-fearing" Roman, one who worshiped God but had not adopted all of the Jewish religious practices. Cornelius receives the sacrament of baptism, but not before he and his gathered household receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This event marks a new Pentecost. The circle of Christian faith has now broadened to include the inhabitants of "the ends of the earth" (1:8). The Spirit first came to Jews (2:1-4), then to the despised Samaritans (8:14-17), and now to the Gentiles.