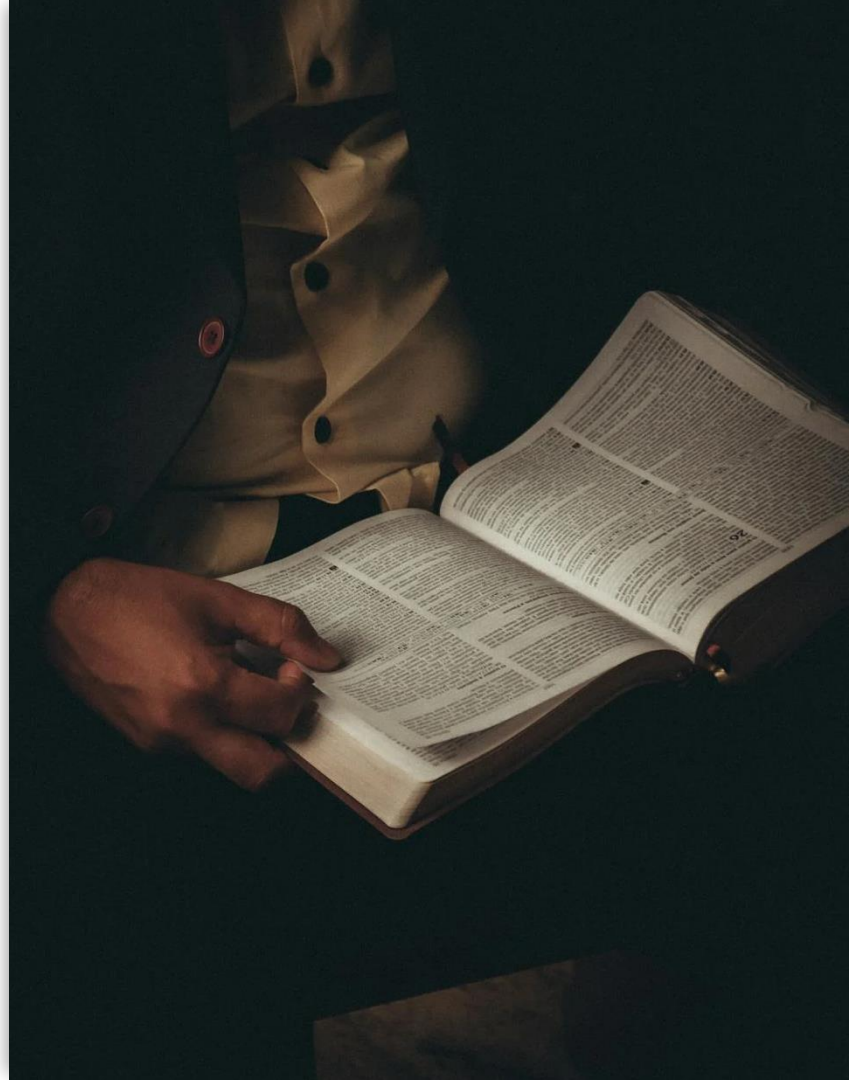


# The Birth of the Church



# Scripture Readings

- **Colossians 3:12-17:** Paul calls believers to clothe themselves in compassion, humility, and love, letting Christ's peace rule their hearts and the word of Christ dwell richly among them through teaching, wisdom, and gratitude.
- **Luke 6:27-38:** Jesus commands radical love: loving enemies, forgiving freely, and giving without expecting return, teaching that God's mercy and generosity should shape how we measure and treat others.



# Summary of the Readings

The readings from Colossians and Luke share a unified call to live the Christian life through love, humility, and mercy.

Colossians calls Christians to clothe themselves with virtues like compassion, patience, and forgiveness, rooted in love that binds all together in perfect unity.

In Luke's Gospel, Jesus demands a radical love that extends even to enemies. His teaching challenges believers to reflect God's mercy in their own dealings, giving generously and forgiving freely. Together, these readings remind us that discipleship is not merely belief but a life of self-giving love and service, mirroring Christ's own life.



# Summary

- **Living as Christ's new creation demands radical love and unity** – Paul urges believers to clothe themselves in compassion, humility, and gratitude, letting Christ's peace guide all relationships.
- **Discipleship goes beyond surface actions** – Jesus calls for love of enemies, forgiveness without limit, and generosity free of self-interest, revealing that true holiness transforms the heart's motives.
- **Our faith shapes how we treat others** – Both readings insist that Christian life is measured by mercy, kindness, and the willingness to give as God gives.
- **Unity and love build the Church** – Together, these passages show that the Church is born and sustained when believers live in harmony, reflecting God's boundless love in word and deed.



## **ONE OF THE STRIKING THINGS...**

- Jesus entered the world in humble circumstances, defying expectations of worldly power or influence.
- He lived in Nazareth, a place considered insignificant, highlighting God's choice to work through the lowly.
- His public ministry began only around the age of thirty, after a long period of hidden life.
- His earthly ministry lasted only a few years and covered a small geographic area, emphasizing the mission left for his followers.

### **Socratic Questions**

- Why did Jesus choose to begin his mission in such humble surroundings instead of a place of power?
- Why did Jesus wait until he was about thirty years old to begin his public ministry?

## **SLOW LEARNERS**

- The disciples were among Jesus' first followers, called early in his ministry.
- They witnessed his miracles and teachings yet struggled to grasp his identity and purpose.
- Their misunderstandings reflected common Jewish hopes for a political Messiah.
- Jesus had to teach them patiently, revealing his mission through words and actions.

## **Socratic Questions**

- Why were the disciples described as “slow learners” in understanding Jesus' mission?
- How did Jesus help the disciples overcome their misunderstandings?

## **LESSONS ON DISCIPLESHIP**

- Jesus gradually revealed to the disciples what it meant to follow him.
- He taught that discipleship requires self-denial, taking up the cross, and serving others.
- Greatness in God's kingdom comes through humility and service, not power.
- Jesus explained that his path involved suffering and death, leading to glory and resurrection.

### **Socratic Questions**

- What did Jesus teach about true discipleship?
- Why did the disciples struggle to accept Jesus' teaching about suffering?

## **SERVICE AND SELF-SACRIFICE**

- Jesus used the Last Supper to teach about sacrifice and communion.
- He instituted the Eucharist, sharing his body and blood as symbols of his sacrifice.
- John's Gospel shows Jesus washing the disciples' feet as an example of humble service.
- Disciples are called to imitate Jesus' example of loving service and self-giving.

### **Socratic Questions**

- How did Jesus show the meaning of self-sacrifice at the Last Supper?
- What lesson did Jesus teach by washing the disciples' feet?


# Via Pulchritudinis

🎨 Jean II Restout — *Pentecost* (1732)

Location: Louvre Museum, Paris

Medium: Oil on canvas

Dimensions: 480 × 775 cm (huge—about 15.7 × 25.4 feet!)

The painting depicts the Pentecost event in a grand, classical architectural setting. At the center, the Virgin Mary stands in a blue and red robe, her hands clasped in prayer, with a flame of the Holy Spirit above her head. She is surrounded by the Apostles, who are shown in various states of awe and devotion, some kneeling, some with arms raised, and some looking upwards. The scene is filled with dramatic lighting, with rays of golden light descending from the sky, creating a sense of divine presence and movement. The architecture features large columns and a high ceiling, adding to the grandeur of the scene.

Jean II Restout's *Pentecost* is a vast Baroque canvas ablaze with divine light and theatrical motion. At its centre, Mary sits calm and radiant, while Apostles swirl around her in awe, arms raised to receive the descending Spirit. Vivid reds, swirling drapery, and rays of golden light create a sense of celestial wind and holy fire. Restout's mastery lies in guiding the viewer's gaze upward, capturing both human wonder and divine action.

Theologically, the painting proclaims Pentecost as the Church's birth, where fearful disciples become fiery witnesses through the Spirit's power. Mary stands as Mother of the Church, model of prayer and openness to God. In Catholic thought, this scene marks the beginning of the Church's universal mission: diverse voices united by one Spirit, transforming the world through proclaiming Christ.

## **FINAL INSTRUCTIONS**

- Before his death, Jesus gave the disciples crucial teachings for their future mission.
- He promised the Holy Spirit would guide, teach, and strengthen them.
- He urged them to remain united in love and faith.
- Jesus prayed for their unity, knowing they would face trials after his departure.

## **Socratic Questions**

- What did Jesus promise the disciples before his death?
- Why was unity so important in Jesus' final instructions?

## **BECOMING APOSTLES**

- After Jesus' death, the disciples were initially afraid and confused.
- Encounters with the risen Christ transformed their fear into courage and faith.
- Jesus commissioned them to spread the Gospel to all nations.
- He assured them of his continued presence until the end of time.

## **Socratic Questions**

- How did the resurrection change the disciples?
- What mission did Jesus give his disciples after his resurrection?

# **THE HOLY SPIRIT: THE PROMISE HONOURED**

- Jesus promised his disciples the gift of the Holy Spirit after his departure.
- On Pentecost, the Spirit came with power, transforming fearful disciples into courageous apostles.
- Peter preached boldly, proclaiming Jesus' resurrection.
- About 3,000 people were baptized that day, marking the Church's birth.

## **Socratic Questions**

- What happened to the disciples on Pentecost?
- Why is Pentecost called the birthday of the Church?

# **JESUS AND THE CHURCH**

- Jesus' ministry laid the foundation for the Church, though he did not create a fully structured organization during his life.
- He spent much time teaching and forming his disciples as future leaders.
- After his resurrection, the disciples saw themselves as an extension of Jesus' mission.
- The Church's origin is rooted in Jesus' entire life, death, resurrection, and the gift of the Spirit.

## **Socratic Questions**

- How did Jesus prepare for the founding of the Church?
- What is the basis for the Church's mission today?



# Closing Prayer

O you, from whom to be  
turned is to fall,

to whom to be turned is  
to rise,

and in whom to stand

is to abide for ever:

Grant us in all our duties  
your help,

in all our perplexities your  
guidance,

in all our dangers your  
protection,

and in all our sorrows  
your peace;

through Jesus Christ  
our Lord.

Amen

(St Augustine, 354-430)