

ABSTRACT
THE BOOK OF ACTS
A PERSONAL PILGRIMAGE WITH THE APOSTLES

The book of Acts is the history of the first Christians who developed and built the first bricks of the Church laying them on the commandment of “the Chief Cornerstone that the builders has rejected” (Acts 4:11)¹. This commandment made them “fishers of men”² by going “into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature”³ and saving those who believed by baptizing them.⁴

So, this book recounts the story of ordinary and simple human beings (among them were four fishermen, two Greek and one tax-collector etc.) whose actions and ministries have, are and will transform the lives of multitude of people around the world by the effectual operation of the Holy Spirit, whom they received after the Ascension of the Lord while waiting, as a community in the upper room, in prayer and supplication.⁵

Did not the same Triune-God make me in His image and unto His likeness and embedded me with His ministerial work? Did not the same Son of God, the second Hypostasis, emptied Himself “*Kenosis*” to save me and commanded me the same that He commanded His Disciples to do? Did not the same Holy Spirit, the third Hypostasis, seal me at my Chrismation right after my Baptism? Did the Disciples receive more or better graces than I did, except for that they witnessed the Inhomination, Crucifixion, Resurrection and the Ascension of the Lord?

What the Disciples witnessed physically in the eyes of the flesh I am witnessing through the eyes of the faith. Therefore, their missionary works, as the ministerial works of the Saints and the Fathers, shall be a directive, a guideline, an initiative and compelling call for me to follow. It is my recognition of the gifts of the Holy Spirit that are dwelling in me, which will burn me in fire if I do not excel and distribute them.

¹ See also Matthew 21: 42, Mark 12: 10 and 1 Peter 2:6 -7 who proclaimed the prophesy of David in Psalm 118: 22.

² Matthew 4: 19.

³ Mark 16: 15.

⁴ Mark cf. 16: 16.

⁵ Cf. Acts 1: 13-14.

So, as a Christian whose identity is rooted in the root of this word Christ, the Word, and who is sealed by the Chrism of the Holy Spirit in the body of Christ, the Church, where I continuously receive my refill of teachings and my connection with the Lord and Savior through the Holy Spirit I am compelled, as the Disciples, to become worthy of my graced name and embark on the ministerial commandment of Christ's.

In this manner, I am reading the Book of Acts. Then, this humble paper is my contemplated pilgrimage through its inspired words, but in accordance to the teachings of the Holy Orthodox Church. It is not meant to claim a deep and full study of the Book, but rather, it is the result of the inspiration that captured my soul at the time of listening to the messages that were spoken to me while cross referencing them with the various readings of different books, articles and speeches that crossed my life and stayed in my fading memory.

Chapter by chapter until the end, I discovered that each one is a station to the destination; the intended destination installed by God's love, grace and mercy. Each station is a resting place for meditation on the continuous zealous work on one's self and for the sake of the entire creation as the Creator is wishing and guiding. At the same time, it is a repetitive ministerial call in various manners and ways and through different people. These stations are a learning process to the individual and to the whole Church as well. They are the extended teachings of the Incarnated Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, the content of this paper is according to the traveling history as it is in the Book written to Theophilus by Luke "the beloved physician" (Col. 4:14) around A.D. 75-85. Some messages may seem repetitive because the chapters conveyed same messages. At the same time, the content does not include the various possible ways of interpreting the passages and it is not a paper of criticism to search for the authenticity of the texts. At the end, it is a paper of faith that include the effects of the power of the Holy Spirit that work in us within the Church. It is my personal pilgrimage with the Apostles as a Christian.

Finally, This personal pilgrimage in the Book of Acts revealed to me through its twenty-eight chapters: God the Creator (Acts 17:24), who made the covenant...the covenant of salvation... with our Fathers (Acts 3:25 & 13:17), and has fulfilled His promise (Acts 3:18) by sending His Son and raising Him from death (Acts 3:22, 26 & 13:23). And

“What is seen and heard” (Acts 2: 33) since the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is the continuation of the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies (Acts 2:16-21, 13:40, 15:15-18 & 27: 25-27). It announces first in Jerusalem and thereafter to the whole world, the Resurrection of Jesus Christ...the Salvation message through the proclamation of the Apostles, the first witnesses and their partners: Stephen (the first martyr), Philip, Barnabas and Paul.

So, the complete thesis will reveal my inspirations on these subjects.

CONTENTS

RESUMÉ	I
ABSTRACT	IV
INTRODUCTION:	1
THE FIRST FLOWER: COURAGE	4
THE SECOND FLOWER: POWER	7
THE THIRD FLOWER: HEALING	10
THE FOURTH FLOWER: ENDURANCE	12
THE FIFTH FLOWER: DISCERNMENT	15
THE SIXTH FLOWER: SERVICE	18
THE SEVENTH FLOWER: WITNESS, MARTYRDOM	21
THE EIGHTH FLOWER: COMING OUT OF THE SHELL	23
THE NINTH FLOWER: IN THY LIGHT WE SHALL SEE LIGHT	26
THE TENTH FLOWER: ARISE AND GO	29
THE ELEVENTH FLOWER: ECONOMIA	31
THE TWELFTH FLOWER: FOR GOD'S GLORY	34
THE THIRTEENTH FLOWER: THEY ARE GOD'S WORDS AND DEEDS	38
THE FORTEENTH FLOWER: HEALING OR SCHISM?	41
THE FIFTEENTH FLOWER: CIRCUMCISSION OF THE FLESH OR OF THE SOUL?	43
THE SIXTEENTH FLOWER: ACTIONS FOR YOUR GLORY	45
THE SEVENTEENTH FLOWER: THE UNKNOWN GOD	48
THE EIGHTEENTH FLOWER: CEASELESS MINISTRY	50
THE NINTEENTH FLOWER: WITNESSING YOUR GLORY	52
THE TWENTIETH FLOWER: UNCEASING MINISTRY	55
THE TWENTY FIRST FLOWER: UNCEASING POURING OF LOVE	58
THE TWENTY SECOND FLOWER: A PAIFUL BUT JOYFUL EXPERIENCE	61
THE YWENTY THIRD FLOWER: FREE FROM FEAR	63
THE TWENTY FOURTH FLOWER: STAY VIGILANT	65
THE TWENTY FIFTH FLOWER: THE SEAT OF JUDGMENT	68

THE TWENTY SIXTH FLOWER: OPPORTUNITIES AS TOOLS	72
THE TWENTY SEVENTH FLOWER: TRUST IN THE LORD	74
THE TWENTY EIGHTH FLOWER: LEARNING JOURNEY	78
EPILOGUE	81
BIBLIOGRAPHY	83