

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

An Actual Experience of God Seventh Week of Easter Monday, May 29, 2017
8:15 AM **Acts 19:1-8;** Jn 16:29-33 (Baptism in the Holy Spirit is available for those who seek it.)

Today we have in the Acts of the Apostles a very interesting story concerning St. Paul and **some early so-called disciples**. Now what were they really? I don't know. Apparently they had some kind of belief in Jesus, but what kind of belief? **They said they had never even heard of a Holy Spirit**, so their formation was very defective since **Jesus introduced people to the Father and the Spirit**. And as the gospel makes it clear the principal belief is that somehow Jesus is in touch with God. Jesus is somehow the road to God. **Jesus is somehow in touch with God and through him we can all be in touch with God**. That's the basic idea of belief in Christ, belief in Jesus as the Christ.

Now there are many other religious categories and many different roles that exist in the history of religion and even in Judaism and we could use them, but they're not necessarily appropriate, for example "prophet." Well, **was Jesus really a prophet?** Well, what did he prophesy? **He was a teacher for sure**, but his teaching all depended on the fact that **he knew the Father and so his wisdom is not just human wisdom**. And here's the remarkable thing: he never went to school. **He was not taught by other masters**, so to speak. He grew up in Nazareth, worked with his foster father, presumably for a while as a carpenter, was known as a carpenter's son, and then he started teaching these remarkable teachings, which are remembered in the New Testament. **So touching Jesus meant realizing somehow that he is from God**. That's what the gospel says.

Now the Acts of the Apostles are talking about people that seemed to be believing in him in some way, but not having any contact. Their belief was perhaps verbal. **There are a lot of people that say they believe and even are convinced they believe, but belief is verbal**; it's a

matter of words, a profession. It's all right; it's a beginning, but doesn't go very deep. For it to go deep we need the Holy Spirit. **For us to really have contact with God through Christ we need the gift of the Holy Spirit.** That's what this is about.

So Paul now baptizes them in the name of Jesus because even though they were supposedly disciples, they hadn't even been baptized, except John's baptism which is not a sacrament. **Now they become baptized**, but not only baptized, then **Paul lays his hands on them and the Holy Spirit comes upon them. That is called baptism in the Holy Spirit**, not Baptism in Christ. That's the sacrament. The font here is the sacrament of Baptism into Christ. This is baptism into the Holy Spirit, which means **an actual experience of God**: powerful, overwhelming; and that's what they describe here. "And they spoke in tongues," strange language, "and prophesied." This doesn't mean foretelling the future necessarily. This means speaking words of truth, and this changed their lives.

Now this kind of experience is very good and **it's something we should desire. It's Baptism in the Holy Spirit.** At this time of year the Church reminds us through the readings of Scripture that such a thing, **such a gift, is available for those who seek it.**