

First General Communion of The New Converts. Choice of the Seven Deacons

All the baptized since Pentecost were instructed in the Bethsaida church upon the Most Blessed Sacrament and prepared for its reception by six of the Apostles robed in long white garments. They received it at the Holy Mass celebrated by Peter in the Bethsaida church, assisted by two of the Apostles. Peter wore over his long, white robe and broad girdle with its flowing ends, a mantle that was



taken out from the chest formed in the back of the altar. It was red and shining gold. It was like a large cape, deep in the back and pointed in front; and it fell so low over the shoulders that only the girdle could be seen at the side. It was fastened on the breast with three little shields. On the middle one just in front of the breast was the representation of a figure holding a loaf in one hand. The lowest shield, that nearest the points, or the ends of the mantle, bore on it a cross. On either shoulder was a figure formed of precious stones.

The altar was covered first with a red and over that a white transparent cloth, on which was laid another little white linen cloth like a corporal. On an oval plate lay a little pile of white bread sliced very thin and furrowed with lines for breaking. Beside it stood a white bowl with a foot like a low chalice, or ciborium, in which after being consecrated by Peter the bread broken into morsels was placed for distribution among the Faithful. Besides all this, the chalice used at the Last Supper was standing full of wine on the altar. When, during Holy Mass, Peter uttered the words of consecration over the bread and wine, I saw the bread become luminous, while above the altar, as if issuing from a cloud, appeared a resplendent hand. It accompanied the movements of Peter's hand as he blessed the bread and wine, and did not disappear till all dispersed after receiving Communion.

The Apostles and disciples were the first to receive the Blessed Sacrament from Peter after his own Communion. When the bowl, or ciborium, was emptied, Peter replenished it from the plate on the altar, and then proceeded with the distribution of the Sacred Species. The chalice also was

handed by him to the Apostles and to all the others. The communicants were so numerous that the church could not contain them, and many had to stand outside. The first to receive Holy Communion left the church in order to allow others to enter. The communicants did not kneel, but while receiving stood reverently bowed.

Before choosing the seven deacons, I saw the Apostles gathered around Peter in the Last Supper room, where they assisted him in a solemn ceremony. They accompanied him to the Holy of Holies, where John laid upon him the mantle, another placed the miter on his head, and another put the crosier into his hand. After all had received Communion from Peter, robed in his sacred vestments and surrounded by the Apostles, he addressed in the entrance hall a large crowd of disciples and new converts. He said among other things that it was not becoming for the Word of God to be neglected for the care of clothing and nourishment; consequently Lazarus, Nicodemus, and Joseph of Arimathea could not with propriety longer oversee the temporal interests of the Community as they had hitherto done, for they now had become priests. Then he added some words relative to the order observed in the distribution of alms, of household affairs, of widows and orphans. Stephen, a slender, handsome youth, stepped forward and offered himself for the services needed. Among others that did the same, I recognized Parmenas, who was one of the elder disciples. There were among them some Moors, still very young, who had not yet received the Holy Ghost. Peter laid his hands upon them and the stole crossed under their arm. While he did so a light was infused upon those that had not yet received the Holy Ghost. After that the treasures and goods of the Community were delivered over to the seven deacons, and for their accommodation was assigned Joseph of Arimathea's house, which was not far from that of John Mark. John Mark helped them. The money was carried on asses, and consisted of bags filled with different kinds of coins. Some were like little stalks twisted into screws, others like stamped plate strung together on a little chain, and others again were in small, oval leaves.

Most of the movables consisted of large packs of different stuffs, coverlets, clothing, also numbers of vessels and various kinds of furniture suitable for plain housekeeping.

On the day following the giving over of Joseph of Arimathea's house to the deacons, I saw the Apostles dispersing into Judea.

Peter wrought more miracles than all the others. He drove out devils, raised the dead—yes, I even saw an angel going before him to the people and telling them that they should do penance and ask Peter for help.

I saw the healing of the lame man. It was about three hours after noon when

Peter and John went up to the Temple with several of the disciples. Mary and some of the holy women went too. A lame man had been brought on a litter and laid at the door of the Temple. Peter and John, on their arrival, exchanged some words with him. Then I saw Peter standing under an awning in the open square on the south side of the Temple, his back turned to that part of the edifice in which was the altar of sacrifice, and addressing the people in a fiery speech. During his instruction I saw the door of egress beset by soldiers and priests conferring together. And now I saw Peter and John, as they turned again toward the Temple, accosted by the lame man and petitioned for alms. He was lying outside the door, a perfect cripple, leaning on the left elbow, while vainly striving to raise something with the crutch in his right hand. Peter said to him: "Look up!" and when the man obeyed, he continued: "I have no silver nor gold, but what I have, I give to thee! In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, arise and walk!" Peter raised him by the right hand, while John grasped him under the shoulder. The man, full of joy and vigor, stood upon his feet, and I saw him leaping about cured, and running with shouts of triumph through the halls of the Temple.

Twelve Jewish priests who were there seated on their chairs looked, with outstretched necks, in the direction of the tumult, and as the crowd around the cured man increased at every moment, they left their seats and withdrew. Peter and John went into the forecourt, and I saw the former mounting the teacher's chair from which Jesus had taught as a Boy of twelve. The cured man was standing before him encompassed by a multitude of people, some from the city, others strangers from a distance. Peter preached long and in words full of inspiration. It was already dark when I saw him, along with John and the cured man, seized by the Temple soldiers and thrown into a prison near the judgment hall in which he had denied the Lord. Next day all three were taken by the soldiers, and with much ill-usage, up the same flight of steps upon which Jesus had stood, and there tried by Caiaphas and the other priests. Peter spoke with great warmth, after which they were set free.

The rest of the Apostles had passed the night in the house of the Last Supper in continual prayer for the prisoners. When Peter and John returned and told them all that had taken place, their joy burst out into a loud act of thanksgiving, and the whole house shook, as if the Lord wanted to remind them thereby that He was still among them and had heard their prayer. Upon that, James the Less said that Jesus, when He appeared to him alone on the mountain in Galilee, had told him that after Peter and John, on going up to the Temple, would be imprisoned and then set free, they should keep themselves somewhat retired for awhile.

On this news, I saw the Apostles shutting up everything, and Peter, with the Blessed Sacrament suspended round his neck in a bag, going with the others to Bethania. They made the journey in three bands. The Mother of God and other women went also. While in Bethania, the Apostles preached enthusiastically at the disciples' inn, at Simon's, and at Lazarus'. When they again returned to Jerusalem, they were more enthusiastic, more determined than ever. Peter, when teaching in the house of the Last Supper and in the church at the Pool of Bethsaida, declared that now was the time to discover who had preserved the Spirit sent by Jesus, now was the time to labor, to suffer persecution, and to give up all things. Whoever did not feel himself strong enough for this should depart. I saw that about a hundred of those that had most recently joined the Community withdrew from the great crowd in the Bethsaida church.

When Peter, accompanied by John and seven other Apostles, went again to teach in the Temple, he found numbers of sick lying on litters under tents in the Valley of Josaphat. Many others were lying around the Temple in the court of the heathens and even up as far as the steps. I saw Peter performing most of the cures. The others did indeed effect some, but they helped Peter more than they cured. Peter cured those only that believed and were desirous of joining the Community. In those places in which the sick lay in two rows opposite each other, I saw cured, Peter willing it, those upon whom his shadow fell, while he was busied with the opposite row.