

The Holy Spirit and Discipleship

Name: _____

In this chapter, we have learned about the struggles and eventual success of the Apostles. Let us now explore the role of the Holy Spirit in empowering the Apostles to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Read Mark 14:26–31 on page 15 of the Student Text.

How would you describe Peter's attitude in this scene?

Answers may vary.

Peter eventually fails to carry out his vow to follow Jesus and die with him. When Jesus is arrested, he and the other Apostles flee. Yet as Jesus is led away to be questioned by the Jewish authorities, Peter follows at a distance to keep an eye on what is happening. Peter arrives at the courtyard of the Jewish high priest and decides to sit and wait by a fire. As he is warming himself, Peter is questioned.

Read Mark 14:66–72 on page 16 of the Student Text.

How does the Peter we read about in this passage compare to the Peter we read about in Mark 14:26–31?

Answers may include Peter is not confident or bold, but timid and afraid; and before he wanted to die for his faith, but now he denies his faith.

Why do you think Peter denied Jesus?

Answers may vary.

In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus makes a promise to the Apostles:

Mt 10:16–20

10 ¹⁶“Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore, be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. ¹⁷But beware of men, for they will hand you over to sanhedrins and flog you in their synagogues. ¹⁸And you will be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for testimony to them and the Gentiles. ¹⁹But when they

hand you over, do not be anxious about how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. ²⁰For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.

Jesus promises the Apostles that “the Spirit of your Father”—the Holy Spirit—will be given to them. The Holy Spirit will strengthen the Apostles and enable them to know what to say when they face persecution.

Let’s now turn to the Acts of the Apostles, which describes the actions of the Apostles after Jesus’ Resurrection and Ascension into Heaven:

Acts 2:1–4

2 ¹When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. ²And suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. ³And

there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them. ⁴And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit . . .

How does what happened on the day of Pentecost fulfill Jesus’ promise in Matthew 10?

The Apostles receive the Holy Spirit.

Acts 2:22–24

2 ²²“Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs which God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know— ²³this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. ²⁴But God raised him up, having loosed the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it. . . .

Acts 2:32–33

2 ³²This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. ³³Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this which you see and hear. . . .

Acts 2:41

2 ⁴¹So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

Acts 2:36–38

2 ³⁶Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.” ³⁷Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brethren, what shall we do?” ³⁸And Peter said to them, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” . . .

Empowered by the Holy Spirit, Peter gives a speech in front of a large crowd:

How does the Peter we read about in this passage compare with the Peter we read about in Mark 14:66-72? Give a few specific examples to support your answer.

Answers may include Peter denied his faith to a few people, but now he defends his faith in front of thousands; and Peter was afraid, but now he is fearless.

What happened after Peter's Spirit-empowered speech?

Three thousand people were baptized.

Peter is a changed man. Before, he was afraid to admit even to knowing Jesus. Now, he is defending his faith in Jesus before a crowd of thousands. In Matthew 10, Jesus had promised that the Holy Spirit would give the Apostles the words they needed to say. This is exactly what happened to Peter. He knew what to say and was not afraid to say it.

Jesus promises to give *us* the same Holy Spirit that he gave to the Apostles. This promise is fulfilled when we receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. As the *Catechism* teaches, "the effect of the sacrament of Confirmation is the special outpouring of the Holy Spirit as once granted to the apostles on the day of Pentecost" (CCC 1302). The same Holy Spirit that fell upon the Apostles on the day of Pentecost falls upon us! Trusting in the power of the Holy Spirit, we will be given the strength to be witnesses to our faith in Jesus.

Apologetics and Martyrdom

Name: _____

Turn to page XX of the Student Text and reread the section entitled “Peter’s Change of Heart.”

How did Saint Peter die?

He was crucified upside down.

Who was responsible for the death of Saint Peter and many other Christians?

The Roman emperor Nero.

Many of the earliest Christians faced persecution for their faith, especially at the hands of several Roman emperors. Some Christians witnessed to the faith by becoming martyrs. All the Apostles except for Judas and John were martyrs. However, martyrdom was not the only way the Apostles witnessed to the faith. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, Saint Peter famously stood up and witnessed to his Christian faith by using rational arguments and persuasion. As a result of his arguments and the power of the Holy Spirit, many people became convinced of the truth of Christianity (see Acts 2:14–41).

Like the Apostle Peter, other Christians in the early Church became apologists—people who defended Christianity through reason and arguments. The martyrs and apologists both sought to witness to the Christian faith in the hostile pagan world of the Roman Empire.

Which group do you think would be more effective in convincing hostile Romans that Christianity was true—the martyrs or the apologists? Give several reasons to support your answer.

Answers may vary.

Not many are called to be martyrs. But all of us are called in some way to be apologists. In one of his letters, Saint Peter wrote, “Always be prepared to make a defense to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and reverence” (1 Pt 3:15; emphasis added).

Are you prepared to “make a defense” for your faith? Why or why not?

Answers may vary.

How can you better prepare yourself to be an apologist?

Answers may vary.

In defending our faith, Saint Peter reminds us to do it “with gentleness and reverence.” **What do you think he means by this?**

Answers may vary.

Why is this good advice?

Answers may vary.
