

22 April 2024 -- Monday of the 4th week of Easter

[Acts 11:1-18; John 10:1-10](#)

Homily

The readings from the Acts of the Apostles, which we read as the first reading of Mass every day since the feast of Easter, show us what is most essential about the Church. It has already existed since Pentecost, even if it has obviously not yet given itself the structures it will later need to fulfil its mission. There is no question yet of an ordained priesthood, which will appear later, nor of organisation into dioceses with bishops at their head, nor of a centralised structure, nor of councils as guardians of orthodoxy... All this will come later and will obviously be important.

A look at this nascent Church reveals its very essence: the proclamation of the good news of salvation brought by Christ. This proclamation was made spontaneously by all those whom Jesus had explicitly sent, but also by all those who had received this message from the first witnesses. First there were the women who came to the tomb on the morning of the third day. Then there were those who had a personal experience of the Risen Christ, like the disciples of Emmaus and Paul of Tarsus.

Then there were the first deacons, chosen to serve tables at liturgical assemblies, but who went off to witness to their new faith even in the lands of the pagans. Barnabas was sent to check out what was happening in Antioch, and went to fetch Paul from Tarsus. It was the young Mark who joined them, then abandoned them, but who would later go on to write the first collection of stories about Christ, called the Gospels, and who would also be the first bishop of one of the most vibrant local Churches of the first centuries, that of Alexandria. It was the crowds of monks who, having received the Word in this Church of Alexandria, took it with them to the deserts of Egypt.

From that time onwards, many paid with their blood for their faithfulness in bearing witness to what they had seen and heard. Subsequently, the Church developed a hierarchical and clerical structure that enabled it to carry out its mission throughout the centuries that followed and across the entire universe. But if the message of Jesus of Nazareth has reached us, it is first and foremost through the multitude of believers who, over the centuries and millennia, have shared among themselves and passed on to subsequent generations the experience they have received and lived.

Document extrait du [site de l'abbaye Notre-Dame de Scourmont](#), qui se trouve sur le territoire de Forges, à sept kilomètres au sud de la ville de Chimay, en Belgique. Notre-Dame de Scourmont est une abbaye de l'Ordre Cistercien de la Stricte Observance.

It is up to all of us to continue this mission. Having all been called, at the moment of our baptism, we have all been "sent". So Jesus is talking about all of us when he says: *"If anyone receives the one I send, he receives me; and he who receives me receives the one who sent me"*.

Armand Veilleux