

15. May 2025

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

“The baptism of the Ethiopian minister”

Acts 8:26-40

An angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Rise and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” This is a desert road. And he rose and went. And behold, an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a minister of the Candace the queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of all her treasure, had come to Jerusalem to worship and was returning; seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah. And the Spirit said to Philip, “Go up and join this chariot.” So Philip ran to him, and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?” And he said, “How can I, unless some one guides me?” And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. Now the passage of the scripture which he was reading was this: “As a sheep led to the slaughter or a lamb before its shearer is dumb, so he opens not his mouth. In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken up from the earth.”

And the eunuch said to Philip, “About whom, pray, does the prophet say this, about himself or about some one else?” Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this scripture he told him the good news of Jesus. And as they went along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, “See, here is water! What is to prevent my being baptized?” And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught up Philip; and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing. But Philip was found at Azotus, and passing on he preached the gospel to all the towns till he came to Caesarea.

Guided by an angel, Philip met the Ethiopian, a high official of the queen of Ethiopia. Like many people from other countries, he had come to Jerusalem to worship God. The wisdom of the laws that ruled the Israelites and directed them to God did not go unnoticed among the nations, and there were those who wanted to worship and know this God of Israel better. So they also became familiar with the writings of the Old Testament.

On his way back to his homeland, the Ethiopian minister was reading the prophet Isaiah in his chariot. But he did not understand his words well and had no one to explain them to him. Then the Spirit of the Lord moved Philip to follow the Ethiopian's chariot. Noticing that he was reading the Scriptures, he asked him, *"Do you understand what you are reading?"*

So he entered into conversation with the royal minister, who showed great interest in better understanding the passage he had just read: *"As a sheep led to the slaughter or a lamb before its shearer is dumb, so he opens not his mouth"*.

He invited Philip to sit next to him. Seeing his keen interest and open heart, the apostle had no difficulty in preaching the Gospel to him from this passage of Isaiah and leading him to Jesus. In fact, the eunuch gladly accepted the Gospel. In that hour of grace, moved by Philip's words, he received faith in the Lord. The Holy Spirit had been at work in this Ethiopian, for it is He who convinces of the truth and gives the necessary assurance and understanding.

It is important that we look to the Holy Spirit, whom we consider to be the soul of the Church and the first evangeliser. The approaching Feast of Pentecost will remind us that it was He who gave the Apostles the light of understanding. In His light they saw the light (cf. Ps 36:9). At the same time it was He who strengthened and urged them to carry on the work of evangelisation. At the end of today's text, we hear that the same Spirit caught up Philip and took him to Azotus to continue preaching the Gospel in every town he passed through.

But before that, the apostle baptised the royal minister when he asked him, *"What is to prevent my being baptized?"* Indeed, there was no obstacle to him receiving the baptism of salvation. Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and he was baptised. God had been merciful to this man who, after being baptised, would certainly have taken the Good News to Ethiopia and told the queen what had happened to him.

In any case, the Scriptures testify that "he went on his way rejoicing". The one who managed the queen's material treasure had now found the greater treasure. Perhaps in that moment of grace he realised that he was returning to his country with a much greater treasure, a treasure that neither moth nor rust can consume (Mt 6:19).

Meditation on the day's reading: <https://en.elijamission.net/the-worth-of-the-holy-tradition-2/>

Meditation on the day's Gospel: <https://en.elijamission.net/the-attitude-of-the-envoys/>