



Our dear fellow Pilgrims,

What does it exactly mean "to preach the gospel in "gentile territory"? During the time of the first disciples, this was a pretty difficult concept to grasp even for some of the Apostles. It is recorded in the gospel of Matthew (15:24) that *Jesus was only sent to the lost sheep of Israel*. Remember that God chose the Israelites as His own, and He was their God. The idea of preaching the message of Jesus Christ - our Savior and Messiah, meant that the good news was *also* meant for the gentiles, that is to say that the salvation included those people who were not Jewish. *If you were drawn to God, you too can embrace* Jesus as Lord and His message of universal salvation.

St. Paul called himself "the preacher to the gentiles" (Romans 11:13). It is not as though St Paul was exclusively a preacher to the gentiles, because his custom was to have preached in the synagogue first (Acts 17:2). And in Acts 10:11-15, we learn that St. Peter had a vision that led him to believe that it was safe (so to speak) to "enter the homes of pagans and eat with them". And little of the mission post-pentecost event was known about St Matthew, whose feast we celebrate today. However, scholars agree that he either did missionary work in Persia, Ethiopia or Parthia.

And we are now together here as disciples who are taking on this pilgrimage. While we celebrated Mass at St Peter's Church in Jaffa, it struck me that we, too, are called and invited to share the message as Christian Catholics to everyone and in every land and pathways we walk. The idea of the "new evangelization" is alive, while the Holy Spirit continues to inspire us as disciples to preach the gospel with renewed ardor, ways, and zeal. The message of salvation of Jesus Christ is for all!

Your spiritual guides in the journey,

Fr. Vincent D'Agostino

Fr JC Merino

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 19:2-3, 4-5

R. (5) Their message goes out through all the earth.

The heavens declare the glory of God;
and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.
Day pours out the word to day,
and night to night imparts knowledge.

R. Their message goes out through all the earth.

Not a word nor a discourse
whose voice is not heard;
Through all the earth their voice resounds,
and to the ends of the world, their message.

R. Their message goes out through all the earth.

JAFFA: St. Peter the Apostle

(Taken from Magnificat: Holy Land Companion, p. 317)

Jaffa (Yafo in Hebrew), "the beautiful", is one of the ancient ports anchored along the sandy Mediterranean shores of the Holy Land.

In ancient times, Jaffa was an important port. It was from here that Jonah took ship to escape his mission.

And it was here that Simon Peter, son of Jonas, arrived to carry out his mission. As the first of the Apostles, Peter passed through every region (Acts 9:32). Jaffa is the place where he resuscitate Tabitha... It was also here that Simon Peter had a vision of the sheet, which opened new horizons to the new faith (Acts 10:11).

In this vision, we learn that Peter had always respected kashrut, that is, he had never eaten anything the Mosaic Law had deemed unclean (Lv 11; Dt 14). A voice from the heavens declared to him that all foods were henceforth clean (Acts 10:15). Peter could thus enter the homes of pagans and eat with them.

As far as St Peter's ministry was concerned, it was in Jaffa that opened new horizons to the new faith for pagan believers started to engage and experience the powerful invitation of the New Covenant.

Peter said: My brothers, you are well aware that from early days God made his choice among you that through my mouth the Gentiles would hear the word of the gospel and believe. And God, who knows the heart, bore witness by granting them the holy Spirit just as he did us.

Acts 15:7-8



I want you to imitate this Word who is our rule, and the saints who followed him... I tell you again, unless you rise up, open your eyes, and take as your model the boundless goodness and love God has shown to his creatures, you will never attain such perfect greatness of soul but will be so small-hearted that you will have no room either for yourself or for your neighbors.

Saint Catherine of Siena