



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS **GENERAL AUDIENCE** Paul VI Audience Hall

Wednesday, 15 January 2020 [\[Multimedia\]](#)

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today we conclude the catechesis on the Acts of the Apostles with Saint Paul's last missionary leg: that is Rome (cf. Acts 28:14).

Paul's voyage was one with the Gospel's journey, and is proof that when the course of men and women is lived in faith, they can become transit spaces for God's salvation, through the Word of faith which acts as a leaven that is capable of transforming situations and of opening ever new paths.

Paul's arrival in the heart of the Roman Empire marks the end of the account of the Acts of the Apostles which does not end with the martyrdom of Paul, but rather with the abundant sowing of the Word. The end of Luke's narrative, which is hinged on the voyage of the Gospel throughout the world, contains and summarizes all the dynamism of the unstoppable Word of God, Word that wants to "run" in order to communicate salvation to all.

In Rome, Paul first meets his brothers in Christ who welcomed him and give him courage (cf. Acts 28:15), and whose warm hospitality reveals how much his arrival was awaited and desired. He is then allowed to live on his own under *custodia militaris*, that is with a soldier who acts as his guard. He was under house arrest. Despite his condition as a prisoner, Paul is able to meet notable Jews to explain why he was forced to appeal to Caesar, and to speak to them of the Kingdom of God. He tries to convince them with regard to Jesus, starting from the Scriptures and showing them the continuity between the novelty of Christ and the "hope of Israel" (Acts 28:20). Paul identifies as profoundly Jewish and in the Gospel he preaches, that is, the Good News of Christ dead and Risen, he sees the fulfilment of the promises made to the chosen people.

This informal meeting which the Hebrews had agreed to, was followed by a more official one during which, for an entire day, Paul proclaims the Kingdom of God and tries to open his listeners

to faith in Jesus “from the law of Moses and from the prophets” (Acts 28:23). Since not everyone is convinced, he denounces the hardened heart of the People of God, which is the reason for his guilt (cf. Is 6:9-10) and passionately celebrates the salvation of nations which instead show that they are receptive to God and capable of listening to the Word of the Gospel of life (cf. Acts 28:28).

At this point in the narrative, Luke concludes his work by showing us not Paul’s death but the dynamism of his homily, of a Word that “is not fettered” (2 Tim 2:9). Paul does not have freedom of movement but he is free to speak because the Word is not fettered — it is a Word that is ready to be fully sown by the Apostle. Paul does this “quite openly and unhindered” (Acts 28:31), in a house where he welcomes those who want to receive the proclamation of the Kingdom of God and meet Christ. This home, open to all hearts that seek, is the image of the Church that, despite being persecuted, misunderstood and chained, never tires of welcoming each man and woman, with a maternal heart, in order to announce to them the love of the Father which became visible in Jesus.

Dear brothers and sisters, at the end of this itinerary which we have lived together by following the voyage of the Gospel throughout the world, may the Holy Spirit rekindle in each of us the call to be courageous and joyful evangelizers. Like Paul, may He make us capable of pervading our homes with the Gospel and of making them Cenacles of fraternity in which to welcome the living Christ who “comes to meet us in every man and at all times” (cf. Advent Preface).

Special Greetings

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today’s Audience, especially the groups from Finland and the United States of America. Upon you and your families, I invoke the joy and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ. May God bless you!

Lastly, I greet *young people*, the *elderly*, the *sick* and *newlyweds*. Open your heart to the Church’s needs and following the example of Jesus, be close to your brothers and sisters by building a more just world.