Cornelius Is Baptized

BASED ON ACTS 10:9–48

Note to parents and leaders: Acts 10:34–43 is recommended for the Baptism of Jesus Sunday in year A of the lectionary, and for Easter Sunday for all three years of the lectionary. You will find that story on page 44 of the Lectionary Story Bible Year A.

The recommended reading for this Sunday, Acts 10:44–48, is a very incomplete story without the first part of the chapter. So this story is a summary of Acts 10:9–43, but then moves on to focus on verses 44–48.

Peter wasn't sure if it was a dream or not. "How could it have been a dream," he said. "I was wide awake."

It seemed so real. "I saw a big cloth coming down out of the sky," Peter told his friends. "And in the cloth were some of the animals we Jewish people are not supposed to eat."

Then Peter heard a voice in his head. "Peter," said the voice, "Take these animals. Cook them and eat them."

"But I can't," said Peter. He said it out loud, even though there was nobody else with him to hear it. "I can't eat those things. Jewish people don't eat those kinds of animals. They are unclean."
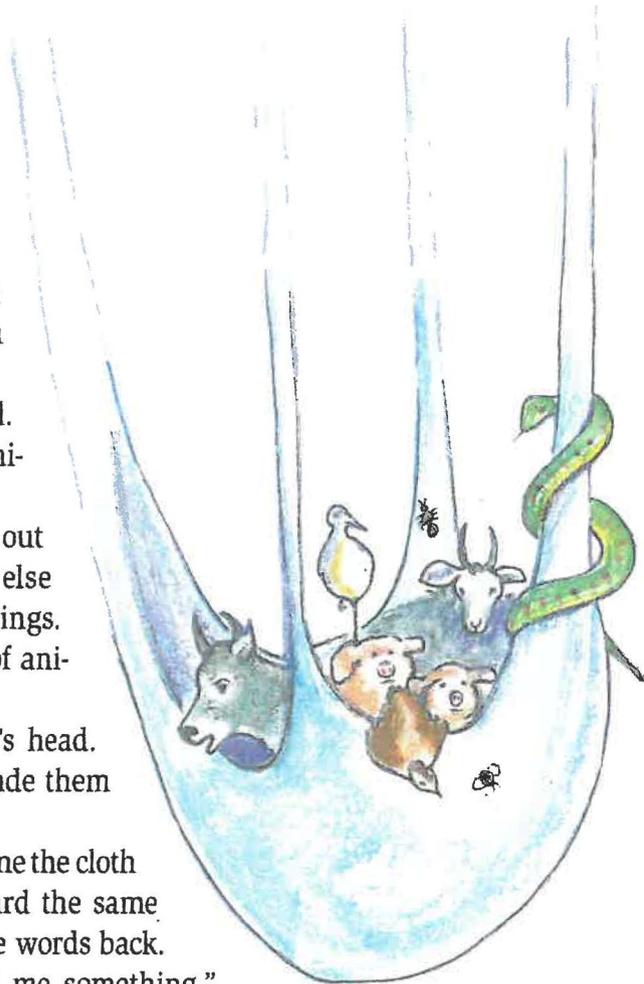
"Wrong!" said the voice in Peter's head. "Don't say they are unclean. God made them and so they are clean."

This happened three times. Each time the cloth came down and each time Peter heard the same words and each time he said the same words back.

"This must be God trying to tell me something," Peter thought. Just then there was a loud knock on the door.

"Is your name Peter?" said the man at the door. Peter nodded.

"I have a message for you from Cornelius. Cornelius would like you to come and see him."

Peter looked very surprised. "Cornelius is a Roman soldier!" he thought. "He isn't Jewish. I shouldn't go to his house."

Then Peter remembered the sheet with the animals in it. "God made Cornelius just like God made me. I'm not unclean so Cornelius isn't unclean either. I will go to visit him."

Cornelius was glad when Peter came to his house. "Thank you for coming," he said to Peter. "I've invited all my friends and my family, so they can hear you tell us about your friend Jesus. Will you do that?"

"Of course," said Peter.

Cornelius had a big house and a lot of people were there. Peter stood on a box so everybody could see and hear him.

"My friends," he said. "Something happened to me that taught me an important new idea. I learned that God doesn't have any favourites. God loves everybody, not just the Jewish people, but everybody in the whole world."

Then Peter told them the story of Jesus. He told them the stories of how Jesus taught people about God and about how to live God's way – how Jesus had made sick people feel better. "Then something terrible happened," said Peter. "Or at least it seemed terrible at first. Some of the rulers thought Jesus was trying to get an army and fight them, so they killed him."

"But here's the best part of the story," said Peter. "We all thought Jesus was dead, but Mary of Magdala and the other women went to the place where Jesus' dead body was supposed to be, and it was gone! And then they saw Jesus alive again, but in a new way! The other friends of Jesus also saw him. We *saw* him. "Jesus is alive. Not alive in his body. Jesus is alive in our hearts!"

All the people in Cornelius' house were so happy to hear that. Some of them started to sing. Others started dancing. All of them were excited. Peter looked at them and smiled. "I think God's Spirit is in your hearts right now!"

"Yes, that's right," said Cornelius. "Just look at us. See how happy we are?"

"This is wonderful," said Peter. "The Spirit of God is in your hearts even though you are not Jewish. That's what my dream was about. Would you like to be baptized?"

"Oh, yes, please," said Cornelius and all the people in his house. "Yes, please!"

So they all walked down to a river, and Cornelius and all his family and friends were held under the water for just a moment, and then lifted up again.

"I feel clean and new inside," said Cornelius. "I feel the Spirit of God in my heart. I am going to live God's way!"