

Increasing

Acts 16:1-15

Each day, it's important to take your bearings. Where are you today? In the Easter season, in the scriptures, in your daily life, in your very self? Spend a few minutes getting your bearings for the day.

Let's briefly examine where we are in the Book of Acts and then begin our day with a prayer for deliverance—for ourselves, our fraternity brothers, and all Exodus Men.

You are fighting through difficulties. Whenever we set out on mission, there will be many obstacles. Persecution is never far behind, as well as internal divisions. We have to remain faithful, no matter the challenge, and look for new ways to witness to Jesus.

Pray that the Lord grants deliverance to you, your family, and your fraternity.

Pray for freedom for all men in Exodus, just as they are praying for you.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created, and you shall renew the face of the earth. O God, who have taught the hearts of the faithful by the light of the Holy Spirit, grant that in the same Spirit we may be truly wise and ever rejoice in his consolation. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

A Reading from the Book of Acts

And he came also to Derbe and to Lystra. A disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer; but his father was a Greek. He was well spoken of by the brethren at Lystra and Iconium. Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him; and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews that were in those places, for they all knew that his father was a Greek. As they went on their way through the cities, they delivered to them for observance the decisions which had been reached by the apostles and elders who were at Jerusalem. So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily.

And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. And when they had come opposite Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them; so, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing pleading with him and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." And when he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

Setting sail therefore from Troas, we made a direct voyage to Samothrace, and the following day to Neapolis, and from there to Philippi, which is the

leading city of the district of Macedonia, and a Roman colony. We remained in this city some days; and on the sabbath day we went outside the gate to the riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer; and we sat down and spoke to the women who had come together. One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to listen to what was said by Paul. And when she was baptized, with her household, she begged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay." And she prevailed upon us.

Reflection

The Church continues to grow when the faith is lived and shared. It is not a numbers game, however. The point of growth is to bear fruit for God, sharing the gifts we have received so that others may also draw close to God. This growth is a sign that only exists because God makes our testimony and invitations fruitful.

This pattern of growth in the Church has a resonance in our lives. If faith is present within us, it seeks to grow. Although the seed of the Gospel should put down ever deeper roots and begin to sprout new shoots of growth in us, we know that we do not become saints overnight. We may even regress at times, but the grace of God continues to draw us more deeply into the life of Christ. God will not be satisfied until we reach the full stature of Christ, to which he is calling us.

We will see fruit in our lives as we continue to share what God has given us as a gift with others. We cannot become complacent in the Christian life and living out the mission of being a disciple of Jesus. People are drawn to join in where good things happen—like the prayer of Paul and his fellow workers in Philippi.

Use your celebration of the Easter season to invite others to join you. Can your fraternity invite some others to join you in prayer and an Easter feast?

Week 5 Action Items

1. Pray about your mission.

As we watch the apostles—especially Paul—unfold their mission to the nations, is God inspiring you to imitate them? Pray about what he intends for you as you continue to grow in prayer and the Christian life. It does not have to be dramatic. It may simply be living differently as a family or engaging your friends more intentionally. Whatever it is, pray about being open to God's call.

2. Watch an uplifting movie.

Film is a powerful medium that conveys drama, action, emotions, and, often, joy. We know that film is also used in destructive ways when the human person is instrumentalized or people are led into immoral desires. That said, there are many great films that would be fun to watch as a family or

a fraternity. Plan an Easter film gathering with a religious, uplifting, or artistic film that you can discuss as a group. Make sure to read reviews or watch it in advance to avoid any scandal.

3. Stay vigilant with technology use.

In this celebratory season, how are you doing with technology? Do you find yourself falling back into bad habits? Are devices taking away your joy? Take some time to evaluate this and bring it to prayer. Make any adjustments that are needed.