

## Fruit that Lasts

Acts 5:17-42

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 with the growing community in Jerusalem. The first Christian community remains a model, as they prayed, followed the apostles' teaching, served the poor, and celebrated in their homes. We are seeking to enter into the experience of the resurrection with them and to join in their mission as witnesses.

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 by the light of the Holy Spirit, did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit we may be truly wise and ever enjoy his consolations. Through the same Christ Our Lord. Amen.

## A Reading from the Book of Acts

But the high priest rose up and all who were with him, that is, the party of the Sadducees, and filled with jealousy they arrested the apostles and put them in the common prison. But at night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out and said, "Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this Life." And when they heard this, they entered the temple at daybreak and taught.

Now the high priest came and those who were with him and called together the council and all the senate of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought. But when the officers came, they did not find them in the prison, and they returned and reported, "We found the prison securely locked and the sentries standing at the doors, but when we opened it we found no one inside." Now when the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these words, they were much perplexed about them, wondering what this would come to. And some one came and told them, "The men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people." Then the captain with the officers went and brought them, but without violence, for they were afraid of being stoned by the people.

And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the

high priest questioned them, saying, "We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and you intend to bring this man's blood upon us." But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised Jesus whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him."

When they heard this they were enraged and wanted to kill them. But a Pharisee in the council named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law, held in honor by all the people, stood up and ordered the men to be put outside for a while. And he said to them, "Men of Israel, take care what you do with these men. For before these days Theudas arose, claiming to be somebody, and a number of men, about four hundred, joined him; but he was slain and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing. After him Judas the Galilean arose in the days of the census and drew away some of the people after him; he also perished, and all who followed him were scattered. So in the present case I tell you, keep away from these men and let them alone; for if this plan or this undertaking is of men, it will fail; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found opposing God!" So they took his advice, and when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. And every day in the temple and at home they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.

### Reflection

As men, we very often worry about consequences and want to remain in control. We're afraid of what will happen if we do things outside the box, bold or dangerous, or shake up our status quo. God shows us that he will provide. He is never outdone in generosity, and so when the disciples boldly preach his name—even in the face of persecution—he intervenes. God does not allow the work of the apostles to remain contained or bound by these kinds of restraints. In fact, adversity seems to help the community to grow, as the city is filled with news of what they are doing.

Never stand in the way of what God is doing. This may sound like an obvious point, but imagine a world where we allow God's work to progress freely within us and our families. This would be a very different world. Even without realizing it, we are standing in God's way when we don't give him enough time in prayer, don't follow his promptings, and put ourselves before others.

He wants us to experience his freedom by opening our minds and hearts to what is true and good, and he wants us to live this out fully and freely. Think of the difference this would make for us and others. We would be true witnesses and could help others to live a joyful and celebratory life centered on the resurrection.

Gamaliel was right. The early Church was of God and persisted. We need to do the same: to persist in the good work of following Christ that we have started, even if it means being found worthy to suffer for his name.

#### Week 2 Action Items

Build your new prayer routine.

Try a Trappist or monastic beer for celebration.

Keep your fraternity strong.