

Communal Festivity

Acts 2:37–47, 3:1–10

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 in Jerusalem with the apostles. Jesus has commanded us to wait for the coming of his Spirit. We unite ourselves to the apostles in prayer and in witnessing to the resurrection.

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

Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?" And Peter said to them, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children and to all that are far off, every one whom the Lord our God calls to him." And he testified with many other words and exhorted them, saying, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation." So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. And they held steadfastly to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers.

And fear came upon every soul; and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common; and they sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. And a man lame from birth was being carried, whom they laid

daily at that gate of the temple which is called Beautiful to ask alms of those who entered the temple. Seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked for alms. And Peter directed his gaze at him, with John, and said, "Look at us." And he fixed his attention upon them, expecting to receive something from them. But Peter said, "I have no silver and gold, but I give you what I have; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise and walk." And he took him by the right hand and raised him up; and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. And leaping up he stood and walked and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God, and recognized him as the one who sat for alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

Reflection

The Acts of the Apostles shows us that the saving work of Jesus continues to unfold in the Church. We are meant to embody this work and continue it.

It is truly amazing to see the response of the crowd in the reading today. Peter tells them that they are part of a crooked generation, and they actually turn away from it to be saved. We see real change in them as they embrace repentance and receive God's grace through the sacraments. Today, we can easily become so accustomed to everyone just staying content within the crooked generation in which we continue to live. Like the Apostles, we need to embrace the work that God has given us—we need to live an authentically Christian life.

The key elements of the Christian life are exemplified by the community of Christians in Jerusalem:

holding to the truth in the apostles' teaching,
living the faith in fraternity,
practicing sacramental worship in the Eucharist, the breaking of the bread,
and
personal prayer.

They also went beyond these key elements to something extraordinary: giving all that they had to God to care for anyone who had need. God definitely gave powerful graces to this community, working signs and wonders through them, but they did not have anything that is not available to us today. We have the same gifts, although we have to accept them fully and live them out to see the same fruits.

Trusting in Jesus, we can offer freedom to others on his behalf, drawing them to faith and forgiveness. We may see the same results: from lameness to leaping, whether it is a physical healing, or more often an experience of inner release. If we express joy in being freed by Jesus, in whatever fashion our own "leaping" takes, it will cause wonder in others. They will ask, "how did this happen," and this will lead them back to Jesus. The early community teaches us that rejoicing and celebration form an essential expression of the Christian life, one that we are rediscovering in this Easter exercise.

Day 7 Action Item

Consider your financial freedom. The early Christians held all things in common. We may not be called to that level of generosity and gift, although the Church teaches us that our goods are meant to serve the broader community of the Church and society. God wants us to have spiritual freedom in our finances so that we do not live under the tyranny of covetousness, which Paul calls idolatry. How does Christian freedom shape your finances?

In addition to working to support the needs of our families, the Church calls us to tithe a portion of our income to support our parish and the Church's charitable work. We need to live a charitable life and avoid a consumerist mentality that tries to find meaning by purchasing the next thing. When we live according to the Gospel, the greatest festivity will come from investing our time in others and breaking bread with them. The joy that springs from our friendships will not rest self-satisfaction because it responds freely to the needs of others. Today, ask the Lord to help you discern how he wants you to distribute the gifts he has given you. Is he calling you to share these gifts with greater generosity?