

April 11, 2024 -- Homily for Thursday of the 2nd week of Easter

[Acts 5, 27-33; John 3, 31-36.](#)

Homily

The story we are reading these days from the Acts of the Apostles is both very profound and somewhat comic. Luke, who is an excellent writer, knows how to convey profound teaching using symbolic and poetic language. Here, he describes the beginnings of the Church in an almost playful style.

After receiving the Holy Spirit, the Apostles begin their mission as preachers of the Word and healers. Peter's first great speech after Pentecost already led to many conversions. Peter, accompanied by John, almost immediately began his career as a healer by commanding the cripple standing at the gate of the Temple to walk. He courageously harangued the crowd: "You killed the Prince of Life, but God has raised Him from the dead. Repent! Peter and John were then put in prison and brought before the High Priest and the Sanhedrin, who forbade them to speak or act in the name of Jesus. They answered with candour: "What do you think is right in the sight of God: to listen to Him, or to listen to you? They were released and went back to teaching and performing miracles, which led to another arrest.

During the night, as we saw in yesterday's reading, the angel of God opened the prison door and sent them out to preach: "Go and proclaim to the people all these words of life". They were arrested again and forbidden to speak about this Jesus. And Peter replied: "We must obey God rather than men". And the account of these events, which unfold with astonishing speed, is peppered with a description of the life of the first community of believers in Jerusalem, which is already getting organised. And the last words of the account we have just read already indicate that all this will lead the Apostles to death, like their Master. And they are well aware of this.

Over the last few days, we have been reading the Gospel account of Jesus' meeting with Nicodemus. This account, as John's Gospel now stands, was followed by a testimony by John the Baptist about Jesus in response to a request from his own disciples. In it, John expresses his joy at being the forerunner of the Messiah. Then comes the text we have just heard, which immediately followed Jesus' words to Nicodemus. In a few brief sentences, this account sums up the whole mystery of salvation: God the Father sent his Son. The Son, who has received the Spirit without measure, says what he has heard from the Father. The Father loves the Son and has given everything into his hands. The conclusion is so clear that it almost makes you tremble,

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either with joy or fear: He who believes the Son has eternal life. (He will not have it; he already has it). He who refuses to believe (the verb "refuse" is important) will not see life. All the declarations of the Councils and all the volumes of theologians have added nothing to these few words: He who believes has life. All that can be added will only be the consequences of these affirmations.

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