

8. May 2025

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

“Signs and wonders by the hands of the apostles”

Acts 5:12-21a

Many signs and wonders were done among the people by the hands of the apostles. And they were all together in Solomon's Portico. None of the rest dared join them, but the people held them in high honor. And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women, so that they even carried out the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and pallets, that as Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on some of them. The people also gathered from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all healed. 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.

Great grace accompanied the apostles, and by their hand miracles and wonders were performed for the people, signs which confirmed their message. The people received them with joy and gratitude, and the number of believers increased more and more. But the situation was very tense, for the Jews feared the reaction of their religious authorities. The text even says that "none of the others dared join them". This shows that from the beginning, since the coming of the Lord, the proclamation of the Gospel has suffered the worst persecutions.

In the Old Covenant, the true prophets who witnessed to God were hated by those whose father was the devil, as Jesus testified against His persecutors (Jn 8:44).

Nevertheless, the Lord continued His work through the Apostles: many people came from everywhere with great faith, bringing the sick and those possessed by evil spirits. They even waited for Peter's shadow alone to fall on the sick, and Scripture testifies that

"they were all healed". What joy and gratitude this must have aroused among the people! This work of God might have become a great feast of praise for all Israel, and might have brought about many conversions, including those of the religious leaders, had not the high priest and his companions "risen up filled with jealousy" against the apostles.

An evil envy had taken hold of them and blinded them deeply. Therefore, they could not and would not see the work of God through the apostles. Such envy disfigures the vision and is incapable of leaving anything good in the other person. It is as if envy corrodes its victim from within. The religious authorities saw how the people followed the apostles and feared that the miracles and wonders that were happening through their hands would diminish their own influence over the people and endanger their privileged position.

Therefore, they had no choice - or so they thought - but to arrest the apostles again, even though the apostles had already given them to understand that they would not obey their orders to stop proclaiming the name of Jesus. Let us recall Peter's decisive statement urging the religious authorities to judge for themselves *"whether it is right in the sight of God to obey you rather than God"* (Acts 4:19).

This judgement of the apostles was clearly confirmed from above by the heavenly help God sent them: an angel brought them out of prison and gave them an unequivocal command: *"Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this Life"*.

We see here that when religious authority intervenes and tries to prevent the Lord's command to His apostles, as it did in this case, the heavenly Church clearly intervenes to ensure that God's plan is fulfilled. This is a very important sign that underlines God's absolute authority. Only those who seek to do His will, not those who oppose Him, can appeal to the authority of the office they hold.

Imagine the atmosphere of fear and oppression that reigned in Jerusalem, despite the glorious signs of God's love that were there for all to see.

The apostles, on the other hand, were directly under God's authority. They obeyed the angel who had freed them: When they had heard him, they went early in the morning into the temple and began to teach.

Their obedience was to God and to the command they had received from the Risen One. That is why it was also given to His angelic messengers.

It is painful to note that those who were called to teach and guide the people ended up revealing themselves to be enemies of God and of the truth. Jesus Himself and His disciples had to experience their hostility, and will continue to do so until the end of time. That is why the apostles' statement, which we will hear again in the next passage, that we must obey God rather than men, is still important in our time. This hierarchy can never be changed! Our obedience must always be to God first. We willingly give it to those who are authorised to speak in His name. But if they do not, the example of the apostles shows us how the Lord Himself leads the way.

Meditation on the day's reading: <https://en.elijamission.net/help-from-heaven-for-the-evangelization/>

Meditation on the day's Gospel: <https://en.elijamission.net/the-father-draws-men-2/>