

“He is Risen!”

Acts Bible Study
St. Peter’s Catholic Church

Week Two: Trial Before the Sanhedrin

- **Welcome**

For small groups meeting over the internet, it’s good to start off with a few minutes checking in and greeting each other.

- **Begin with a prayer**

In your own words, you can thank God for this opportunity to read his Word, and ask him to guide our reflection on Holy Scripture and our discussion together.

- **Scripture to read and discuss: Acts 5:12-32, 40-42**

Many signs and wonders were done among the people at the hands of the apostles. They were all together in Solomon’s portico. None of the others dared to join them, but the people esteemed them. Yet more than ever, believers in the Lord, great numbers of men and women, were added to them. Thus they even carried the sick out into the streets and laid them on cots and mats so that when Peter came by, at least his shadow might fall on one or another of them. A large number of people from the towns in the vicinity of Jerusalem also gathered, bringing the sick and those disturbed by unclean spirits, and they were all cured.

Then the high priest rose up and all his companions, that is, the party of the Sadducees, and, filled with jealousy, laid hands upon the apostles and put them in the public jail. But during the night, the angel of the Lord opened the doors of the prison, led them out, and said, “Go and take your place in the temple area, and tell the people everything about this life.” When they heard this, they went to the temple early in the morning and taught.

When the high priest and his companions arrived, they convened the Sanhedrin, the full senate of the Israelites, and sent to the jail to have them brought in. But the court officers who went did not find them in the prison, so they came back and reported, “We found the jail securely locked and the guards stationed outside the doors, but when we opened them, we found no one inside.” When they heard this report, the captain of the temple guard and the chief priests were at a loss about them, as to what this would come to. Then someone came in and reported to them, “The men whom you put in prison are in the temple area and are teaching the people.” Then the captain and the court officers went and brought them in, but without force, because they were afraid of being stoned by the people.

When they had brought them in and made them stand before the Sanhedrin, the high priest questioned them, “We gave you strict orders [did we not?] to stop teaching in that name. Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and want to bring this man’s blood upon us.”

But Peter and the apostles said in reply, “We must obey God rather than men. The God of our ancestors raised Jesus, though you had him killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him at his right hand as leader and savior to grant Israel repentance and forgiveness of sins. We are witnesses of these things, as is the holy Spirit that God has given to those who obey him.” ...

After recalling the Apostles, they had them flogged, ordered them to stop speaking in the name of Jesus, and dismissed them. So they left the presence of the Sanhedrin, rejoicing that they had been found worthy to suffer dishonor for the sake of the name. And all day long, both at the temple and in their homes, they did not stop teaching and proclaiming the Christ, Jesus.

- **Discussion / Reflection:**

(Please note, these are meant as a tool to start fruitful discussion. In a small group with great participation you may not get to all the questions. Discussion time should be about 30 minutes in length.)

- Why were the Jewish leaders so intent on arresting the apostles?
- What would it have been like, if you were among the Church at this early stage described in verses 12-16?
- What do you think about the miracle of God freeing them, and then being sent out to preach again?
- Do you find it humorous, the bewilderment of the guards and leaders at finding the prison empty, and the surprise at finding them back in the temple?
- The Sanhedrin was the same group of leaders before whom Jesus was brought for his trial. Peter and John had already been arrested and commanded by them not to speak any more about Christ (chapter 4). What might the apostles have felt as they were put into jail, awaiting to be brought to trial before the Sanhedrin the next morning? How would you have felt?
- What strikes you about the response of the apostles to the Sanhedrin authorities? Finally, the apostles are flogged, suffering for Jesus Christ, but this doesn't stop them. They rejoice and continue to teach and proclaim the good news. What do you do in the face of discouragement? Can you be grateful in the face of disappointment and hurt?
- How do you respond when someone questions your faith? If so, was your response like the apostles here?

- **For the week:**

Pray with chapters 6 & 7 of Acts. There we see the call of the first deacons, followed by the ministry and martyrdom of one of these deacons, Stephen. Read slowly in parts if necessary, make notes of words that stand out, write any questions, or how you are being called to respond.

To consider:

- How is Stephen an inspirational disciple for us to imitate today?
- In what ways do Stephen's arrest, trial, and death mirror the Lord's?

Why not spend time in daily prayer this week, building a new habit or increase one that has already started, developing it further? Quiet yourself, ask for the Lord to be present with you, talk to the Lord, listen in silence, and be thankful!

- **Close with a prayer**

In small group, were there any intentions? This would be a good time to lift up those intentions and ask for the guidance of the Holy Spirit when we encounter hurts or disappointments.