

The Acts of the Holy Spirit

Acts 4:32-5:26

Peter and John, in last week's reading, caused great concern to the Roman-sponsored authorities in Jerusalem by teaching not only the resurrection of the dead but also that Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah (Christ), had been the first so resurrected. The Jerusalem authorities proved unable to contain the Spirit's movement. If the bold confrontation of the powers is one side of the Spirit's coin, what is the other side that Acts shows us in Acts 4:32-37?

Acts 5:1-6 turns the focus away from the establishment of Jerusalem and to the inner workings of the community of Christ-followers. (The word "Christian" has not yet appeared on the stage of world history. Wait a few lessons.) What does Ananias do that offends, and how does Peter name his crime? What happens in Acts 5:7-11 when Sapphira arrives in the place where Ananias was just hours before? How does this episode compare with the way that the confrontation with the Temple authorities goes in Acts 4?

Acts 5:12-16 shifts from a particular episode back to a summary. What sorts of things are the apostles still doing in Jerusalem, and how are the people of Jerusalem responding? How, in this segment, does Peter manifest the power of the Spirit?

Acts 5:17-26 brings the Sadducees back into the picture, this time getting violent despite their earlier resignation to the dilemma. The apostles remain bold in the face of this, but what superhuman phenomenon accompanies their boldness? How do the Sadducees' muscle respond to this miraculous event, and what makes it miraculous?