

Reflection

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5th Monday of Easter

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Sometimes I wonder if there has ever been a movie made of the Acts of the Apostles- somewhat akin perhaps to Cecil B. DeMille's' The 10 Commandments with the walls of the Red Sea towering to the right and left of the Hebrews.

Rightly or wrongly - this impressed many of us in the days of our youth. But as we have been following the Acts of the Apostles throughout these 50 days of Easter, we can see that surely there would be enough drama. There is stoning, imprisonment- and prison escapes, angels, dreams, voices, healings, travels, arguments, proclamations, confrontations, conversions, plots, riots, storms and shipwrecks. It seems it would make an exciting movie (perhaps it has already been done).

Today's first reading records just one such an episode. Paul and Barnabas are forced by an angry mob to flee for their lives, and arriving at a different place they heal a man who had never walked. It was such an exceptional occurrence that the locals hailed the two as gods, bringing oxen and garlands in veneration. Surely it would be a vivid scene. It may be a fanciful idea to suggest such a movie, and the Acts should not be trivialized, but who can say.

The nuances of those accounts, however, might be difficult to capture. The recognition that the man who was crippled from birth, had the faith to be cured, or that the Lord opened the heart of Lydia to Paul's preaching.

Spectacles may be worthy of film, but the underlying substratum of faith, the workings of the Holy Spirit, may not translate so easily into that medium.

The Eastertide Gospels of these 50 days, however, would not make for such dramatic scenes. Drawn mostly from what is traditionally termed, The Farewell Discourse in John, they reveal to us something of Christ's admonitions, instructions, and assurances to his disciples. Over and over there is the assurance of peace, do not fear, the Spirit will teach you. Today's gospel is one such. The admonition to do as Christ has commanded, but the assurance that if they do so, they will be loved by Christ and his Father, and they will come to dwell within them. The promise of the coming advocate should put their hearts and their minds to rest.

This Gospel and others of this season might be seen as the basis for all that was to transpire in the Acts of the Apostles- and subsequently throughout the history of the Christian community.

In the middle of today's Gospel, there is a question asked by Judas (not the Iscariot- the writer is quick to tell us). He asks, "why is it that you reveal yourself to us, and not to the world?" Jesus does not answer- directly. Nonetheless, the answer is implicit; it is the disciples themselves, and us among them, who will continue this witness. Through all generations, to the very ends of the earth.

We are the inheritors, not only of the gospel promises, but also of the witness and examples of the earliest Christian community. This is the reason for our lives, our hopes, and our labours. If subsequent movies were to be made as a sequel to the Acts of the Apostles, it would have to portray through the ages the lives of those who have taken the Gospels to heart, both its commands and assurances, and have borne witness to the salvation it portrays. For those who put their faith in Christ, who trust in the Spirit, will do -- as Christ promises, --

even greater works. Would we ever dare to position ourselves in such a sequel? It might be an interesting question to ask.