

Wednesday May 10, 2006
Holy Communion
Homily on Acts 4:5-12 by Rev Timothy A Leitzke

Peter's got a lot of nerve. He's on trial basically for suspicion of sorcery and everyone knows he's one of Jesus' followers. He takes the trial as an opportunity to preach to the Judean power players, and hammers them with the infuriating claim that the man they crucified was raised from the dead and that his name had saved a crippled man. This is an express ticket to execution. Peter doesn't care. It's an opportunity to speak the Word of God, to put his faith into practice.

The Book of Acts is about the faithful putting faith into practice. The title, "The Acts of the Apostles" kind of gives you the hint. If we leave "Acts" un-translated we get an even better idea of what is going on here. It's the *Praxis* of the Apostles. In English, "praxis" means "informed practice". You could go out and practice with no clue, you could get a clue and do nothing with it, or you can do praxis. In Greek it implies ongoing action, possibly planned, possibly so ongoing that it becomes a part of daily life. So this is the book of the ongoing, planned, theologically informed daily lives of the Apostles.

Peter proclaims the Word of God at his trial because it's his thing in life to do it. It's so much a part of him that it's second nature. He's not a trained orator, though. He's a fisherman. He's actually named Simon; Peter, the nickname Jesus gave him, could easily be a polite insult since it means "rock" and rocks aren't noted for their intelligence.

Peter's bold and eloquent speech is not the product of a world-class education; it is the product of the Holy Spirit. St Luke writes that the Holy Spirit filled Peter, and not at the last second before he opened his mouth, but long before when it rushed into him on the day of Pentecost. That same Spirit had hovered over the waters at creation. That same Spirit has spoken through the prophets. That same Spirit was the life and breath in Jesus the Christ and was now Peter's life and breath. Facing the formidable Sanhedrin—a high council of 71 powerful priests and elders and lawyers—Peter did not have to rely on his fishing skills. The Holy Spirit spoke for him. It spoke the Word of God to people who desperately needed to hear it.

Friends of Christ, we aren't usually dragged before the Sanhedrin for the crime of calling on the name of Jesus; we are alive in a world very much like that of Peter and John. There are a million religions from which you can choose, and

our own Christian faith finds many expressions. The Lutheran profession, that God makes us righteous for free through the faith of Christ, is not popular in this world. Therefore every interaction offers a chance to act out our faith to someone who needs faith.

We might not be before the Sanhedrin but we are before those who doubt, those who cling to idols, those who desperately need to hear about the grace of God. We can share it with them because we have the gift that Peter had. Friends of Christ, we have been filled with the Holy Spirit. I didn't have to smack you in the head or yell in an imaginary language. I didn't have to do anything. I didn't do anything. The Holy Spirit is yours as a gift from God. With the Holy Spirit talking and working through us we can speak the Word of God to those who desperately need to hear it.

Today is another day in the book of Acts, the Acts of God's people, the ongoing and theologically informed practice of us. Our theological information is the faith that we have from the Holy Spirit. Friends of Christ, whatever we know about God is enough to share. The Holy Spirit lives within us. God lives within us. We grow our faith by sharing it. It's like a muscle that needs flexing to stay in top condition. When we flex our faith muscles, when we share

our faith, it becomes second nature. It becomes a part of daily life. We can stand before friends and strangers, co-workers and families, and anyone who needs to hear the grace of God proclaimed, and we can proclaim it. It's another day in the book of Acts, and we're the apostles. Amen