

## Lent Reflections on the Stained-Glass Windows



### Sanctuary Windows

St Peter and Apostle (Upper South Side)

Saturday in the Fourth Week of Lent



*The Angel comes to Peter and the Apostles*



## **Reading: Acts 5: 12-21**

Now many signs and wonders were done among the people through the apostles. And they were all together in Solomon's Portico. None of the rest dared to join them, but the people held them in high esteem. Yet more than ever believers were added to the Lord, great numbers of both men and women, so that they even carried out the sick into the streets, and laid them on coats and mats, in order that Peter's shadow might fall on some of them as he came by. A great number of people would also gather from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all cured.

Then the high priest took action; he and all who were with him (that is, the sect of the Sadducees), being filled with jealousy, arrested the apostles and put them in the public prison. But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors, brought them out, and said, 'Go, stand in the temple and tell the people the whole message about this life.' When they heard this, they entered the temple at daybreak and went on with their teaching.

## **Commentary**

The first few chapters of the Book of Acts indicate a remarkable growth in the followers of Christ in Jerusalem after Pentecost. There were others outside the apostolic community who held the apostles in great respect but are fearful of becoming disciples. Perhaps they wanted to avoid the certain confrontation with the authorities.

The apostles meet and minister at 'Solomon's portico', which was a covered colonnade on the eastern side of the Temple's outer court. St John tells us (10:23) that Jesus taught His disciples there and suggests it was a place where religious people discussed the Scriptures. St Peter and the apostles are continuing this practice of Jesus after His Ascension.

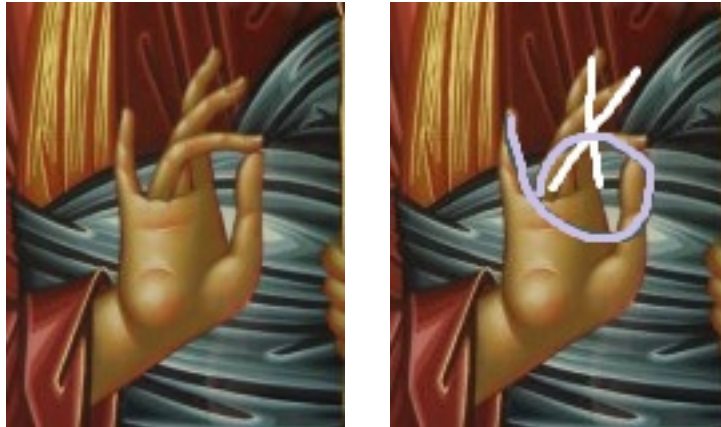
The windows show a colonnade in the background. The leader in this exciting work is Peter, whom we see with a Book (the sign of the Gospel) with his symbol of the crossed keys upon it. Behind him is another of the disciples.

In this passage from the Book of Acts we hear how people 'carried out the sick into the streets and laid them on coats and mats,' so that Peter's shadow could fall on them and they would be healed. Luke makes two other references to similar episodes. In his Gospel (8:43-44), Luke tells of a woman with a flow of blood who touches Jesus's garment and is healed; and in Acts (19:11) he tells us that Paul was so revered and trusted as a healer of the people, that they took handkerchiefs or aprons that had touched his body to the sick, who were healed.

Peter, Paul, and Luke would be among the first to point out that grace and all healing comes only from God, but it most often comes at the hand of people. The love, goodness and holiness of these saints was palpable and transmissible.

Peter and the Apostles are soon arrested and imprisoned but released by an angel. In our window, the angel's left hand points to God and his right hand is held in blessing. It is called the Chi Rho blessing, often

seen in icons of Christ. The word for Christ in Greek is 'ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ' and the first two letters of his name are therefore Chi – X, and Rho – P. the fingers of the angel form the shape of these letters as a blessing.



The Angel tells the Apostles to return to the Temple and preach the Gospel. They are to return to the place where the opposition to their message was strongest and continue their work.

## **Meditation**

The Apostles are carrying on the teaching of Jesus in the shade of Solomon's portico, in the shadow of the Temple. The phrase 'in the shadow of' someone or something has a number of meanings: very close to; or in a position of being unnoticed, overlooked; feeling the negative influence of someone or something. There will be times in our lives when we have sought the comfort of shade, somewhere to rest or even hide away for a little while. There will also be times when we have felt we have been given less attention, considered less worthy in comparison to someone else. There will be times when we have been living with fear, anxiety or a painful memory of something.

Shadows can have an eerie, even sinister connotation. At the moment, we are living in the shadow of a pandemic and as a result we may have already experienced all the above. The story from Acts tells the good news that we can find grace and goodness in the shadows too, for Christ is there with us. Peter's shadow was a source of healing because Christ was working in and through him. Another metaphor would be that our faith in God can be like the angel opening the prison door of our heart with its fears and resentments and urging us into the new life of the Gospel.

Give time to reflecting on what shadows you are living under and pray that your eyes may be open to see the grace and goodness of Christ in these experiences.

### **Prayer**

LORD be gracious to me. Keep me as the apple of Your eye. Show me the wonders of Your great love. In the shadow of Your wings keep me and hide me, for I trust in You. Enfold me in Your unfailing love. Surround me with songs of victory! Let me sing for joy! Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen