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Holy Archangels Orthodox Church
June 22, 2016

Exploratory Bible Study on the Acts of the Apostles: *Acts Through the Eyes of the Early Christians*

Bible Study #2

Preparation for Pentecost...PENTECOST

Read Acts 1:12-26

- Q: How would you describe the disciples post-Ascension and as they await the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost?
- Q: How would you characterize the roles of the different Apostles in selecting another Apostle to replace Judas, the one who betrayed Jesus?
- Q: How would you refer to the type of ‘authority’ being executed here?



Verse 20

Vocabulary: “office” = Gk. *episcopo*, that is bishop, overseer. The Apostles were the first *bishops* of the Church. In many Orthodox countries this word, episcopo, or the derivative, is used for the office of bishop as successors to the Apostles.

From the Church Fathers

“Why did it not rest with Peter to make the election himself: What was the motive? That he might not seem to bestow it as a favor... He acted as expositor, not as preceptor... Mark also the consideration of James and the other Apostles, how they concede the throne to him, and no longer dispute with each other. For that Church was as it were in heaven: having nothing to do with this world’s affairs: and resplendent not with walls, no, nor with numbers, but with the zeal of those who formed the assembly.”—St. John Chrysostom (Homily 3 on Acts 1)

- Q: What is St. John Chrysostom’s understanding of St. Peter’s role and discernment?

Further Application:

- Q: What lessons are there here for us as a church community to strive for and live? How would you characterize the *foundations* of the early Christian Church?
- Q: What lessons are there here for us as individuals open to seeking the truth of Jesus Christ or as those who are striving to follow Him and His way?

Day 50: Holy Pentecost

Read Acts 2:1-13

- Q: What is significant about the state of the Apostles when the Holy Spirit descends on the Church at Pentecost?
- Q: How is the Holy Spirit's coming made manifest?
- Q: What is the outcome of the Holy Spirit's descent on the Apostles?

Read Acts 2:14-36

- Q: How is the descent of the Holy Spirit indicated as the fulfillment of God's love and promise to Israel as manifested by the testimony of the Old Testament prophets?
- Q: How does Pentecost further answer the question asked by the Disciples concerning the establishment of the Kingdom just prior to Christ's ascension?

Read Acts 2:37-40

- Q: How is St. Peter's response to the brethren made manifest in the continuing sacramental life of the Church for all generations following? (*For Orthodox*) What continuity do you see in the life of the Orthodox Church today?

Teaching on the Icon of Pentecost...

- Q: What is significant about the depiction of the Apostles in the icon?
- Q: What else stands out to you?
- Q: From what you have read, what aspects of Pentecost in the life of the Church and the believing faithful can be seen in the icon of Pentecost?

The Life of the First Church

Read Acts 2:42-47

- Q: What characterizes the life of the early Orthodox Church?
- Q: (*For Orthodox*) What do we continue to see of this life in the Orthodox Church today?
- Q: What are the results of this manifestation of the work of the Holy Spirit in the Church?

“You should all follow the bishop as Jesus Christ did the Father. Follow too the presbytery (priesthood), as you would the Apostles; and respect the deacons as you would God's law. Nobody must do anything that has to do with the Church without the bishop's approval. You should regard that Eucharist as valid which is celebrated either by the bishop or someone he authorizes...” St. Ignatius of Antioch (early 2nd Century, *Letter to the Smyrnaeans*)

- Q: Referring to what we have read in Acts thus far and the quote from St. Ignatius above, what is he saying about how authority is exercised in the early Church?

Application:

- Q: What do you find appealing about the witness of our early Christian brothers and sisters?
- Q: How can you and I follow in the example of our forefathers and mothers in the early Church?
- Q: What aspects of this common life would you like to see us manifest in your/ our church?

Next Week: The Pouring Out of the Work of the Holy Spirit through the Apostles