

Acts 5:34-42

The battle between the Sanhedrin or Jewish authority and the Apostles that began in chapter three concludes with today's first reading. The Sanhedrin arrested the Apostles on two different occasions, but both times released the Apostles wherein they continued teaching and performing miracles in the name of Jesus.

Consequently, today we get a window into the discussion of the Sanhedrin on how to resolve the issue. Gamaliel, who was a distinguished Pharisee from AD 20-50, suggests that they take a "wait and see" approach.

He points out that there have been other groups that rose up and came to nothing. While the leaders of these movements enjoyed favor for a while, eventually their followers were scattered. I think we are to see the play on words "rose up" here. The apostles have been proclaiming that Jesus is "risen" from the dead.

In what is sometimes called the "Gamaliel principle," the "wait and see" approach tests the fruits of a movement. St. Paul will speak about the fruits of the Holy Spirit in Galatians 5:22: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Regarding a Catholic parish, we could say that the fruits of the Holy Spirit are unity, mission-focused, faithfulness, supportive, encouraging, joyful, sacramental, prayerful, service-minded, etc. In short, it is Christ-centered.

It's interesting that Gamaliel points out the path of both movements. In both movements, there was a period of growth and popularity. For Theudas, he claimed to be someone important and four hundred men joined him. For Judas the Galilean, he drew people after him. Both movements were centered on the leader and not on God. After a period of rapid growth, there was a serious decline. In Theudas' movement, they "disbanded." For Judas the Galilean, they "scattered." Neither movement enjoyed longevity.

Remember Aesop's fable *The Hare and the Tortoise* – slow and steady wins the race. In a Catholic context, the parish that remains focused on Christ, immersed in prayer, discerns the movement of the Holy Spirit, faithful to God and one another, seeks to share the gifts of Christ beyond itself, offers prayers of thanksgiving and intercession daily will be rewarded by God and grow organically. That is our task as a parish, and it is a noble one indeed! May our patron saint, Thérèse, pick many flowers in heaven for us!

~St. Thérèse, pray for us!