

C2C EASTER SEASON: A JOURNEY THROUGH THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

*Go and Announce the
Gospel of the Lord!*



SAINT BRIGID
— PARISH —

Christ is Risen! Alleluia, Alleluia!

Let us spend this Easter Season celebrating with and learning from the first disciples. Journey with us in community as we read about, explore, and share in the mission of the early Church. Throughout this season (from Easter Sunday until Pentecost) we will read through the Acts of the Apostles. Our hope is that together we can grow in community, faith, and willingness to spread God's love to the end of the earth!

Week 1 (April 12) Acts 1:1—2:13

Week 2 (April 19) Acts 2:14—8:3

Week 3 (April 26) Acts 8:4—9:43

Week 4 (May 3) Acts 10:1—15:35

Week 5 (May 10) Acts 15:36—18:22

Week 6 (May 17) Acts 18:23—23:35

Week 7 (May 24) Acts 24:1—28:31

INTRODUCTION:

Welcome to this most joyous Easter Season, in which we celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus Christ! This is the core message of the gospel, that through His death on the cross and rising from the dead, He has conquered sin and death. He shows us that He is the Savior of the world. Let us rejoice! Alleluia!

The Church recognizes that this huge event cannot be contained in a single day of celebration and so we have the entire Easter Season to reflect more deeply on this great mystery. Throughout this season, our first readings from Sunday and daily Masses come primarily from the Acts of the Apostles. In this New Testament book, we hear about Jesus' Ascension and sending of the Holy Spirit and how the Holy Spirit works to spread the gospel and build up the early Church. The apostles are sent out to preach this gospel, that Jesus our Savior, by His Resurrection, has conquered sin and death. Throughout the Acts of the Apostles, we see how the apostles rely on the Holy Spirit to guide them in their actions and preaching. We see many parallels with the life and teaching of Jesus, including healings, miracles, and persecutions.

In this early church history, we see that the believers gathered in their homes to pray and build each other up, before going out to spread the gospel message to others. They also had no formal church buildings in which to gather, so celebrating their faith at home was central to their worship. They were an example of the first domestic churches, a church that begins with your own family and expands from there. During this uncertain time, as we dive more deeply into their example, let us reflect on how we can build up our own domestic churches.

INTRODUCTORY PRAYER:

Holy Spirit, open our hearts and come into our lives. Inspire us to live out Your gifts and fruits as the first disciples did. We pray that by the end of this Easter Season we may experience a new outpouring of Your love at Pentecost. Amen.

HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE:

This resource is meant to help you, individually or with a small group, read through the Acts of the Apostles during the seven weeks of the Easter Season. We pray that using this resource will help you enter more fully into the life of the early Church and apply these disciples' experiences to your faith journey today.

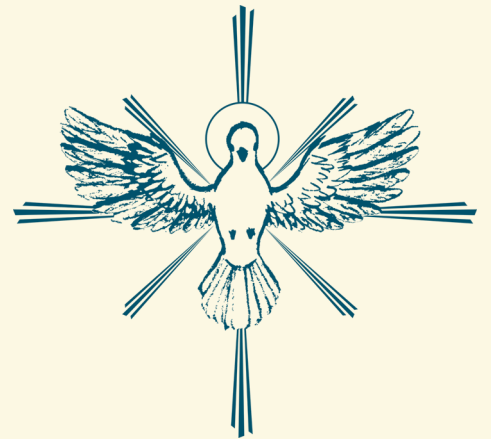
Consider the following ways to walk through the Acts of the Apostles: meet with your Connection to Christ (C2C) small group, use this resource to grow in faith as a household, or use it on your own. If you are looking for a small group to meet with this Easter Season, find dates and times for virtual small groups at saintbrigidparish.org/small-groups.

Each week will include the following components:

- Suggested reading guide (read all at once or follow daily reading plan found at the end of each week's section)
- Highlighted verse for deeper reflection
- Key Scripture passages
- Questions for reflection and discussion
- Highlights of the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit
- Challenge to recognize the Holy Spirit at work in your life
- Historical maps of the apostles' evangelization journeys

We are excited to follow in the footsteps of the apostles with you this Easter Season! Let this journey enable us to explore God's Word and accept the call we receive at the end of Mass:

"Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord!"



WEEK 1 ACTS 1:1-2:13

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

Acts 1:8

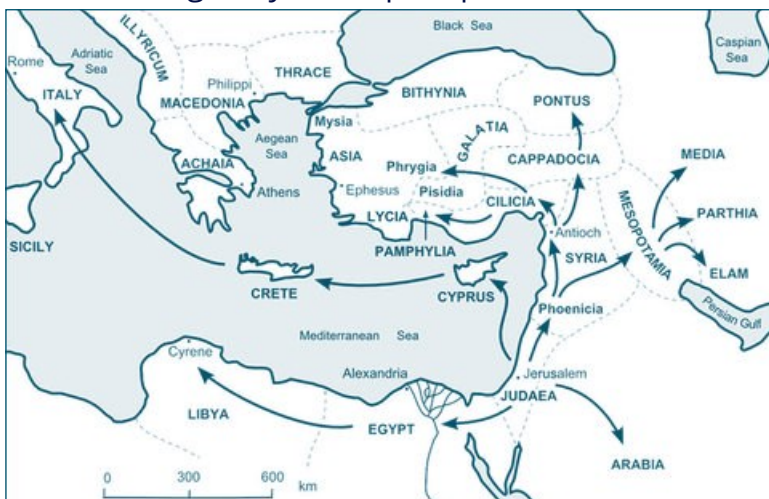
Opening Prayer: Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of Your faithful and kindle in them the fire of Your love. Send forth Your Spirit and they shall be created. And You shall renew the face of the earth. Amen.

Key Passages: Ascension (Acts 1:6-11) and The Coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-13)

Summary: We experience Jesus' Ascension through the eyes of the apostles, and witness the birth of the Church at the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

Reflection Questions:

1. What is the "first book" referred to in Acts 1:1 and what is it about?
2. How long did Jesus appear to the disciples after His resurrection?
3. What does the expression "baptized in the Holy Spirit" mean to you?
4. What are the disciples asked to be witnesses to? To whom?
5. What did the disciples do after they returned to Jerusalem? How do we, as a Christian community, follow their example today?
6. Recall a time when you "devoted yourself to prayer" for any purpose. What was the purpose? How long did you keep it up, and what was the result?



Overview of the Apostles' Journey as They Spread the Gospel

7. What part, if any, does Mary play in your prayer life?
8. Just like the disciples, we have received the power of the Holy Spirit to be witnesses to the ends of the earth. How have you experienced this?
9. How have you been a witness to God's love?
10. How is God calling you to be a witness this Easter Season?

EXPERIENCING THE GIFTS AND FRUITS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT



Counsel—The gift of Counsel can be described as right judgement, supernatural intuition, or holy discernment, especially in times of trouble.

Counsel helps us to answer “What Would Jesus Do (WWJD)?” This gift helps us make choices to live as faithful followers of Jesus. Counsel builds on the gifts of Wisdom and Understanding and is used to discern our actions in this life.



Faithfulness—The fruit of Faithfulness means living according to the will of God and believing He is master of our lives.

Gift of Counsel and Fruit of Faithfulness

In our reading this week, the Holy Spirit descended upon the apostles at Pentecost. This experience was the first Confirmation—where they received the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. Likewise, when we received the Sacrament of Confirmation those same gifts were reawakened within us.

When these early Christians began spreading the gospel they used the gift of **Counsel** while evangelizing those they encountered and defending their faith. Counsel also helped them depend on God’s guidance as they faced fear and difficult situations.

Throughout their journeys, the fruit of **Faithfulness** is apparent in their ever-growing faith in and dependence on Jesus Christ. Because of their faithfulness over 2000 years ago, we can continue to

spread the gospel to the ends of the earth today.

We too face difficult situations and times of trial, but we can learn from the apostles’ experience. By depending on the Holy Spirit’s guidance, we can live without fear, and discern what to do during difficult times. May we remain faithful to Jesus Christ, the One who saves.

Weekly Challenge:

The Weekly Challenge is intended to help you become more aware of the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the results of those Gifts (the fruits of the Spirit) active in your life.

- Have you ever experienced the Holy Spirit’s guidance when making a big decision in your life? What impact did it make?
- How can you use the gift of Counsel this week as you face a trial or difficult situation?
- In recent weeks, have you questioned your faith or has your faith grown stronger? Take these thoughts to prayer and have a heart-felt conversation with Jesus about them.



Closing Prayer:

Pray for the desire to follow in the footsteps of the first disciples.

WEEK 1 READING PLAN					
Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6-7
Acts 1:1-11	Acts 1:12-26	Acts 2:1-13	Acts 1:1-26	Acts 2:1-13	Rest, celebrate Sunday

WEEK 2 ACTS 2:14-8:3

The community of believers was of one heart and mind, and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they had everything in common. With great power the apostles bore witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great favor was accorded them all. Acts 4:32-33



Opening Prayer: Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of Your faithful and kindle in them the fire of Your love. Send forth Your Spirit and they shall be created. And You shall renew the face of the earth. Amen.

Key Passages: The First Converts (Acts 2:37-47), Peter Heals (Acts 3:1-10), The Believers Share (Acts 4:32-37), The First Martyr (Acts 6: 8-8:1)

Summary: We discover what life of the early Christians involved and how the apostles spread the gospel throughout Jerusalem. As the Christians

increased in number, the first deacons are elected to help minister to the growing community. Stephen, one of the first deacons, gives an explanation of the belief in Jesus as the coming Messiah and the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies. His boldness leads to his stoning, making him the first person to be martyred for professing his faith in Jesus.

Reflection Questions:

1. What was the crowd's reaction to Peter's impassioned witness? What did Peter tell them to do in response? How did they react? (Acts 2:37-47)
2. Have you ever had a strong religious conversion experience? If so, how did your behavior change? What did your family and friends think about it? What did you think about it?
3. How did Peter respond to the man lame from birth when he asked for alms? (Acts 3:1-10)
4. Based on Acts 2:45 and Acts 3:5-7, what should the poor expect from you? Do you think the Holy Spirit is calling you to be more generous? Why or why not?
5. In Acts 4:31-35, what do you think is the connection between generosity and unity? What do you think a lack of generosity can do to a parish community?
6. Why do you think the deception of Ananias and Sapphira was so blameworthy?
7. Read the words of Gamaliel in Acts 5:27-42. How have you experienced this your own life?
8. Why was Stephen killed? (Acts 6:8-8:1) Have you ever been ridiculed or persecuted for your faith in Jesus? If so, how? How did you respond?



The Gospel Spreads After Stephen's Martyrdom

9. The strong belief in the resurrection of Jesus allowed the early disciples to boldly share their faith in Jesus. How have you shared your faith with others, both in bold ways and more hidden ways?
10. The early disciples found strength through praying and gathering in community. What communal experiences have strengthened your faith life (for example: Mass, family meals, C2C groups, etc.)?

EXPERIENCING THE GIFTS AND FRUITS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT



Fortitude—The gift of Fortitude can be described as the strength and courage to act decisively during times of difficulties, trials, persecution, or loss.



Generosity—The fruit of Generosity means we are able to give even when we don't benefit from that giving, or when there is a cost to ourselves. It is a giving of one's self for the sake of love of God and neighbor. The saying "It is more blessed to give than to receive" sums up the fruit of Generosity.

Gift of Fortitude and Fruit of Generosity

Acts 6:8-8:1 documents the first Christian martyrdom. Right before Stephen is stoned to death, he demonstrates the gift of **Fortitude**: "filled with the Holy Spirit, he looks intently to heaven and says 'Behold, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God'" (Acts 7:55-56).

We also read about the **Generosity** of those living in the early Christian community—"the community of believers was of one heart and mind, and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they had everything in common" (Acts 5:32).

Today, we need the gift of Fortitude more than ever as we face difficulties, trials, and losses, and we are called to live generously regardless of circumstances.

Weekly Challenge:

The Weekly Challenge is intended to help you, throughout this week, become more aware of the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the results of those gifts (the fruits) in your life.

- In recent weeks, what have you lost? (for example: your job, your freedoms, your ability to go to work or school in person, the opportunity to worship publicly, your outdoor activities, the chance to eat in a restaurant, hugging friends and family). Pray for the gift of Fortitude as you face your losses and help others struggling with theirs.
- How can you be generous this week with your time, talent, and treasure? Consider practicing these ideas:
 1. Time—call, text or video chat with a family member that lives far away; talk to a neighbor in the front yard.
 2. Talent—cook for a friend or elderly neighbor; sew masks for others; help someone with a house project.
 3. Treasure—donate food to someone; give money to a favorite charity; give financial support to your local parish.

Closing Prayer:

Pray for boldness to stand firm in your faith.

WEEK 2 READING PLAN					
Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6-7
Acts 2:14-42	Acts 2:43-3:26	Acts 4:1-31	Acts 4:32-5:42	Acts 6:1-8:3	Rest, celebrate Sunday

WEEK 3 ACTS 8:4-9:43

And so it was that the church throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had a time of peace. Through the help of the Holy Spirit it was strengthened and grew in numbers, as it lived in reverence for the Lord. Acts 9:31

Opening Prayer: Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of Your faithful and kindle in them the fire of Your love. Send forth Your Spirit and they shall be created. And You shall renew the face of the earth. Amen.

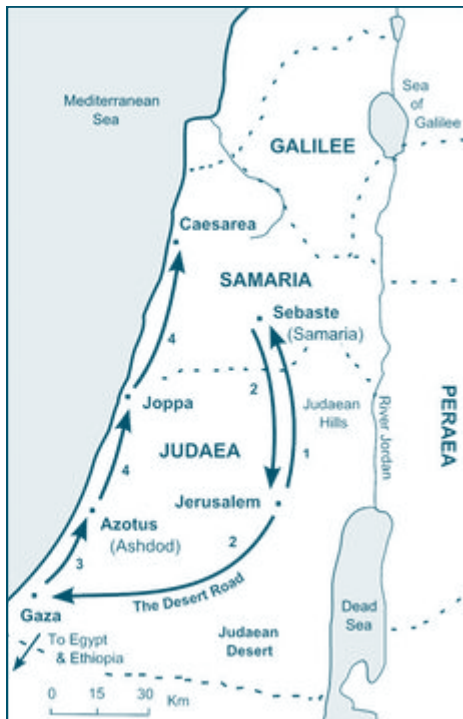
Key Passages: Philip Preaches in Samaria (Acts 8:4-8, 26-40) and Saul's Conversion (Acts 9:1-31)

Summary: Philip shares the good news in Samaria and brings great joy to the people there. As the Church continues to spread, Saul is dramatically converted. He makes a drastic change from persecutor to preacher and he immediately begins evangelizing the nations who once feared him.



Reflection Questions:

1. To what does the expression "laid waste" (Acts 8:3) usually refer? What does it underscore about Saul's attack on the Church? What did Saul hope to accomplish and how did he go about it?
2. Who was Philip? What does his successful ministry in Samaria display about the gospel?



Map of Philip's Journeys

3. Philip received a calling from God to share the news of Jesus to specific people. How was he equipped to share the gospel? (Acts 8:35) How can you be equipped to share the good news?
4. Recall Saul's connection with Stephen's death and persecution of the early Christians. (Acts:8:1-2 and Acts 9:1-2) How does this influence your thoughts about Saul's conversion?
5. Have you ever acted in such a way that Jesus' words, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" could apply to you? What were the circumstances? How did you feel at the time? Now?
6. What was it about Saul's encounter with Jesus that changed him? Share about an encounter that you have had with Jesus.
7. What might God be calling you to change in order to make more room for Him?
8. If you were Ananias, would you have trusted Saul? Why?

9. Have you experienced a time when you personally encountered Christ and someone, like Ananias, helped you grow in faith? How did they accompany you?

10. Saul did not work alone when preaching in Damascus and Jerusalem, but was open to the power of the Holy Spirit. How can you better welcome the work of the Holy Spirit?

EXPERIENCING THE GIFTS AND FRUITS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT



Understanding—The gift of Understanding can be described as the ability to comprehend or grasp (in a limited way) truths or mysteries of God and our faith. Understanding is the foundation of the gift of Counsel.



Joy—The fruit of Joy is more fulfilling than earthly happiness, which is fleeting emotion. Joy cannot be found in earthly things like money or possessions. It is a serene and stable delight found when we put God at the center of our lives, knowing He is with us now and forever in Heaven.

Gift of Understanding and Fruit of Joy

This week we witness Saul’s conversion. During his journey to Jerusalem, he is blinded by a great light and hears the voice of Jesus. The Lord then sends Ananias to Saul with a message that he would regain his sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit: “Immediately things like scales fell from his eyes and he regained his sight. He got up and was baptized” (Acts 9:18). At that moment, Saul received the Holy Spirit and the gift of **Understanding**. Saul was later referred to as Paul, and he was eventually inspired to write 13 New Testament books.

We witness the fruit of **Joy** in the city of Samaria as Philip proclaims the Good News to them—“the crowds paid attention to what was said by Philip when they heard it and saw the signs he was doing. For unclean spirits, crying out in a loud voice, came out of many possessed people, and many paralyzed and crippled people were cured. There was great joy in that city” (Acts 8: 6-8).

Today, we seek the gift of Understanding as we reflect on recent events and try see the world through God’s eyes. Let us see God’s grace in the midst of our challenges, as well as find and share Joy with others.

Weekly Challenge:

The Weekly Challenge is intended to help you, throughout this week, become more aware of the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the results of those gifts (the fruits) in your life.

- Take some extra time to reflect on God being our companion in suffering, and the reason for our hope in the midst of any difficult situation. Read and reflect on one or more of the following Scripture passages:
 1. 1 John 5
 2. Hebrews 6:19
 3. Ephesians 4:32-5:8
 4. Isaiah 43
 5. Psalm 27
- What is some small way you can bring joy to another this week—to a family member, friend, neighbor, or co-worker?

Closing Prayer:

Pray for ongoing conversion of heart for yourself and those you love.

WEEK 3 READING PLAN					
Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6-7
Acts 8:4-25	Acts 8:26-40	Acts 9:1-22	Acts 9:23-31	Acts 9:32-43	Rest, celebrate Sunday

WEEK 4 ACTS 10-15:35

In truth, I see that God shows no partiality. Rather, in every nation whoever fears Him and acts uprightly is acceptable to Him. Acts 10:34-35



Opening Prayer: Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of Your faithful and kindle in them the fire of Your love. Send forth Your Spirit and they shall be created. And You shall renew the face of the earth. Amen.

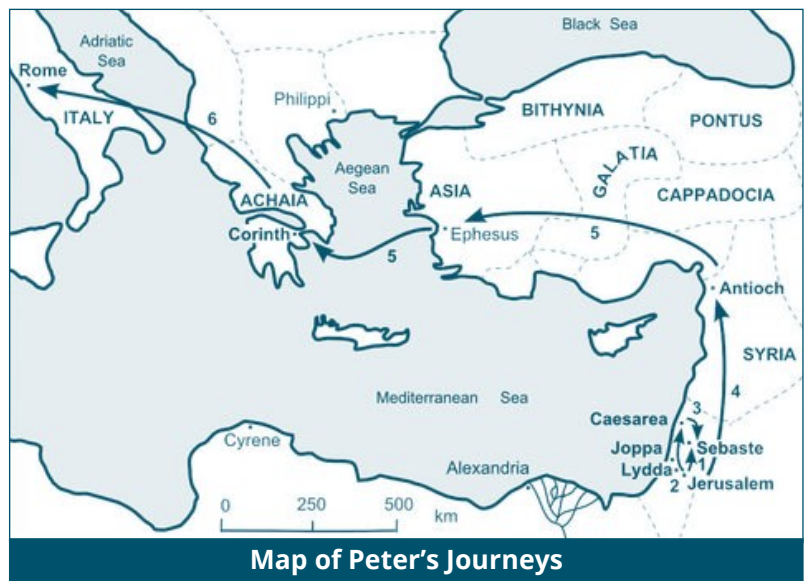
Key Passages: Gentiles Receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:1-48), Peter's Imprisonment and Rescue (Acts 12:1-17), The Council at Jerusalem (15:1-21)

Summary: We follow the adventures of Peter as he baptizes Cornelius (a Gentile), and attempts to convince the Jewish believers that salvation through Christ is meant for all. He is arrested by Herod and is rescued from prison by an angel. We continue with what is commonly referred

to as Paul's 1st missionary journey. Paul preaches boldly, heals a crippled man, and survives a stoning. The early Christians, at the Council of Jerusalem, discern that the Gentile converts need not become Jews.

Reflection Questions:

1. What information is given about Cornelius in Acts 10:1-2? Why is it relevant?
2. What instructions did Cornelius receive from the angel of God and how did he respond? How do you think you would have responded?
3. What did Peter do in Acts 10:9 and why do you think it is important to the story?
4. Explain in your own words what happened Acts 10:10-23. Recall a time in your life when the Holy Spirit worked in a surprising way.
5. When have you presumed that God was showing partiality against someone that you were judging to be "unworthy"?
6. In Acts 12:5, what did the community of believers do while Peter was imprisoned? What can you learn from their actions?
7. God sent an angel to unshackle Peter and lead him to safety. What are the chains that you need God to set you free from?



8. Why was the Council of Jerusalem convened and what happened as a result?
9. Through the prompting of the Holy Spirit, Peter and Paul opened the doors to the Gentiles by sharing the Good News of salvation through Jesus. Who might be the unexpected person that you are being called to share the Good News with?

EXPERIENCING THE GIFTS AND FRUITS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT



Wonder and Awe—The gift of Wonder and Awe can be described as being amazed at God's majesty, power, and perfect love for us. It provides us the desire to please God and is the foundation for the gift of Wisdom.



Kindness—The fruit of Kindness is a willingness to give to others beyond what we owe them. It echoes the greatest commandment to love God with all your heart, mind, and soul, which enables us to truly love our neighbors as ourselves.

Gift of Wonder and Awe (Fear of the Lord) and Fruit of Kindness

We read about Peter's journey and the spread of the Good News to the Gentiles, in particular to a centurion named Cornelius. Peter tells him "In truth, I see that God shows no partiality. Rather, in every nation whoever fears him and acts uprightly is acceptable to him'...While Peter was still speaking these things, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who were listening to the word" (Acts 10:35-44). In this story of conversion, the gift of **Wonder and Awe** is not a fear of being punished by God, but rather an amazement of God's power, mercy, and love.

The fruit of Paul's faith manifested as **Kindness** as he healed the crippled man: "At Lystra, there was a crippled man, lame from birth, who had never

walked. He listened to Paul speaking, who looked intently at him, saw his faith to be healed, and called out in a loud voice, 'stand up straight on your feet.' He jumped up and began to walk about" (Acts 14:8-10).

The gift of Wonder and Awe compels us to love, honor, and worship God in all things. When we have a posture of love, kindness flows.

Weekly Challenge

The Weekly Challenge is intended to help you, throughout this week, become more aware of the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the results of those gifts (the fruits) in your life.

- Pray for a greater awareness of God's power in the midst of this pandemic. Where do you see Him at work?
- How can you see God's majesty—in a bird's song, the gentle rain, the ocean's waves, a spring flower?
- This week, go out of your way to do something kind for a stranger (someone at the grocery store or someone you encounter on a walk around the neighborhood) without reward.

Closing Prayer:

Pray for the desire to love God with all your heart, mind, and soul, and witness His glory.

WEEK 4 READING PLAN					
Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6-7
Acts 10-11:18	Acts 11:19-13:3	Acts 13:4-52	Acts 14:1-28	Acts 15:1-35	Rest, celebrate Sunday

WEEK 5 ACTS 15:36-18:22

What therefore you unknowingly worship, I proclaim to you. Acts 17:23

Opening Prayer: Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of Your faithful and kindle in them the fire of Your love. Send forth Your Spirit and they shall be created. And You shall renew the face of the earth. Amen.

Key Passages: Paul and Silas Evangelize in Prison (Acts 16:10-35), Paul Appeals to the Athenians (Acts 17:16-32)

Summary: Paul and his companions travel and evangelize various communities during his 2nd missionary journey (50-53 AD).

Reflection Questions:

1. How did Paul and his companions decide where to preach? (Acts 16:6-10)
2. How would you discern that a plan you had in mind to pursue was not what the Holy Spirit wanted you to do? What tools do you have to help you discern God's direction in your life?
3. In Acts 16:16, what was the spirit of "divination" that Paul exorcised? Why were the slave girl's owners angry at Paul?
4. Why is the church so opposed to the occult? Name some things in society today that are profitable yet morally wrong.
5. What were Paul and Silas doing while in prison? Who was witnessing their actions?



Paul's Second Missionary Journey

6. Why do you think Paul and Silas did not flee when the doors were opened and their chains were unfastened? What happened after they stayed?
7. The jailer and his whole household were converted because of Paul and Silas. Whose witness has impacted your life? What was the ripple effect?
8. How did Paul appeal to the people of Athens in terms they could understand?
9. Who in your life needs you to witness to them that "God is not far from each of us, for in Him we live and move and have our being"? How can you meet them where they are?

EXPERIENCING THE GIFTS AND FRUITS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT



Knowledge—The gift of Knowledge can be described as the ability to determine God's purpose for our lives. With that knowledge, we have the ability to listen and then respond. Knowledge provides us with deep self-awareness.



Gentleness—The fruit of Gentleness allows us to be mild in behavior— forgiving rather than angry, gracious rather than vengeful. The gentle person is meek like Christ Himself, who said, "I am gentle and humble of heart".

Gift of Knowledge and Fruit of Gentleness

We read about Paul's gift of **Knowledge** regarding God's purpose for his life, even in the midst of imprisonment in Philippi: "About midnight, while Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God as the prisoners listened" (Acts 16:25). Even while in prison, Paul knows what his mission is and converts not only the prisoners, but the jailer and his family.

Paul exemplifies the fruit of **Gentleness** as he talks to the people at Areopagus about their worship of pagan gods: "You Athenians, I see that in every respect you are very religious. For as I walked around looking carefully at your shrines, I even discovered an altar inscribed, to an 'Unknown God.' What you unknowingly worship, I proclaim to you" (Acts 17:22-23).

Today, in this time where we may have had a chance to slow down in our lives, may we pray for a deeper awareness of God's purpose for our life and be gentle to ourselves and others.

Weekly Challenge:

The Weekly Challenge is intended to help you, throughout this week, become more aware of the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the results of those gifts (the fruits) in your life.

- Pray for the gift of Knowledge and the ability to see the pandemic through God's eyes.
- Is there some aspect of your life in which you are being called to be more gentle with yourself?
- Instead of being quick to judge someone, instead can you respond to that person with gentleness?



Closing Prayer:

Pray for the gentleness to accept people where they are, so that you can better love and accompany them as you both grow in relationship with God and one another.

WEEK 5 READING PLAN

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6-7
Acts 15:36-16:5	Acts 16:6-15	Acts 16:16-17:9	Acts 17:10-34	Acts 18:1-22	Rest, celebrate Sunday

WEEK 6 ACTS 18:23-23:35

Yet I consider life of no importance to me, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to bear witness to the gospel of God's grace. Acts 20:24

Opening Prayer: Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of Your faithful and kindle in them the fire of Your love. Send forth Your Spirit and they shall be created. And You shall renew the face of the earth. Amen.

Key Passages: Miracles and Conversions Abound (Acts 19:1-20), Paul's Farewell Speech to the Elders (Acts 20:17-38), Paul Recounts his Conversion (Acts 22:1-21)

Summary: We follow Paul and his companions on his 3rd missionary journey (54-58 AD). This journey ends in Jerusalem with Paul's arrest and the beginning of his various trials before the Jews and Romans.



Reflection Questions:

1. Why did Paul stop preaching at the synagogue at Ephesus? Where did he preach instead? How long? What happened as a result? (Acts 19:8-10)
2. What type of books did many of the new believers gather and burn? What prompted them?
3. Have you "gathered and burned" any possessions, habits, or attitudes in response to your growing docility to the Holy Spirit? If so, what? Is God calling you to do more?



Paul's Third Missionary Journey

4. Paul, in response to those making profit from fashioning idols, proclaimed, "gods made with hands are not gods." What are some of the "gods" that are worshipped today?
5. How would you describe Paul's tone in his speech to the elders of Ephesus in Acts 20:18-38? How do you think the elders felt as they listened to him?
6. How often do you reflect on the "course of ministry" that you have received from God? How would you describe your ministry?
7. How does your life "bear witness to the gospel of God's grace"?

8. What did Paul say about his religious background? (Acts 22:3)
9. How were you educated in the Catholic faith? What effect has this education had on your relationship with Jesus? How has your faith grown in recent years?
10. Paul's witness recounted his beliefs and behaviors before his conversion, the details of his encounter with the risen Christ, and the dramatic difference in his beliefs and behaviors after that encounter (Acts 22:3-21). Recount your faith journey using that same pattern.

EXPERIENCING THE GIFTS AND FRUITS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT



Wisdom—The gift of Wisdom can be described as a desire to contemplate God's creation and see God's work in our lives and world. It enables us to keep God center in our hearts so that we can live and treat others as Jesus did. Wisdom is the foundation of Counsel.



Self-Control—The fruit of Self-Control means the ability to exercise moderation and resist temptations. However, it does not mean to deny oneself, but limit one's wants to what is an

appropriate behavior or level of indulgence.

Patience—The fruit of Patience allows us to treat others with thoughtfulness, tolerance, and compassion, in spite of their imperfections, because of a knowledge of our own imperfections and our need for God's mercy and forgiveness.

Gift of Wisdom and Fruits of Self-Control and Patience

We witness the gift of **Wisdom** as Paul gives his farewell speech to the leaders in Ephesus (Acts 20:17-36). He speaks about the trials they will encounter as they continue to preach the Gospel, but at the same time knows that he must finish his course and the ministry he was given from the Lord Jesus. He recognizes the importance of connecting with others and of keeping God central in our lives.

The fruits of **Self-Control** and **Patience** are evident throughout much of the rest of the Acts of the Apostles and particularly this week during Paul's arrest, imprisonment, and transfer to Caesarea (Acts 21-23).

Today, the gift of Wisdom can help us live more like Jesus. The fruit of Self-Control allows us to develop virtuous habits, and Patience trains us to be more thoughtful in our interactions with others.

Weekly Challenge:

The Weekly Challenge is intended to help you, throughout this week, become more aware of the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the results of those gifts (the fruits) in your life.

- What characteristics of Jesus do you most admire (love, mercy, compassion, humility, etc.)? Why?
- In what area of your life do you wish you had more self-control? Do one small act of self-control in this area of your life this week.
- What is one way you can be more patient this week with a family member, neighbor, friend, or stranger?

Closing Prayer:

Pray for the ability to be fully present in each moment God gives you.

WEEK 6 READING PLAN					
Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6-7
Acts 18:23-19:41	Acts 20:1-38	Acts 21:1-36	Acts 21:37-22:29	Acts 22:30-23:35	Rest, celebrate Sunday

WEEK 7 ACTS 24-28:31

He received all who came to him, and with complete assurance and without hindrance he proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ. Acts 28:30-31

Opening Prayer: Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of Your faithful and kindle in them the fire of Your love. Send forth Your Spirit and they shall be created. And You shall renew the face of the earth. Amen.

Key Passages: Paul's Persistent Defense of the Way (Acts 24:10-26:32), Stormy Seas (Acts 27:1-44), Paul in Rome (Acts 28:11-30)

Summary: Our adventure through Acts draws to a conclusion as we journey with Paul as he is held, questioned, and persecuted by authorities, survives a shipwreck, is unharmed by a snakebite, and travels to Rome. In spite of the obstacles, he continues to minister to all he encounters. Many are healed and converted to Christ.



Reflection Questions:

1. What is "the Way" referred to in Acts 24:14? (See Acts 9:2, 18:25,26, 19:9,23, 22:4)
2. Over and over again, Paul recounted his conversion story in order to give witness to Christ and defense for his actions. Why are our personal witness stories so important?
3. In Acts 26:25, Festus accused Paul of being driven mad. Why does it appear that the world at large seems to think the Christian way of life is "mad" today?



4. Is there anyone in your life who thinks your beliefs and lifestyle are foolish? How do you respond?
5. Why did Paul advise against setting sail from Fair Havens when they did? What happened as a result of their failure to heed his warning? (Acts 27:9-20)
6. Name a time when you ignored a "warning" from someone of faith or perhaps directly from the Holy Spirit. Why did you do it and what happened because of your decision?

7. What did Paul do in Acts 27:33-38 and what act of worship does it remind you of today?
8. In spite of all the hardships Paul endured throughout his journey, he persevered, remained at peace, and continued to minister to all he encountered. What gave him that peace, perseverance, and zeal? How can you emulate Paul in your life?
9. What story in the Acts of the Apostles has been the most memorable or inspirational for you? How has this journey enriched your Easter Season?

EXPERIENCING THE GIFTS AND FRUITS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT



Piety—The gift of Piety can be described as prayer, obedience, and affection for God—not because of duty, but out of love. Another word for piety is reverence.



Peace—The fruit of Peace is a tranquility that comes from our trust and reliance on God rather than getting caught up in anxieties. Prayer and worship can help us experience an inner peace and share this peace throughout the world.

Love—The fruit of Love, also referred to as Charity, encompasses our love for God and neighbor. This kind of love is not a passing feeling or infatuation, but an unconditional, selfless kind of love that seeks the good of the other and expects nothing in return.

Gift of Piety and Fruits of Peace and Love

Paul was blessed with the gift of **Piety**, even while imprisoned in Rome. “He remained for two full years in his lodgings. He received all who came to him and with complete assurance and without hindrance he proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 28:30-31). In witnessing Paul’s Piety, we readily see the fruit of **Love**. We also witness the fruit of **Peace** throughout his journeys, in spite of all the hardships.

Through prayer, we can develop the gift of Piety which prompts us to continually grow in our relationship with God. The intimacy we build in that relationship will result in the fruit of internal Peace which better equips us to share the fruit of Love with others.

Weekly Challenge:

The Weekly Challenge is intended to help you, throughout this week, become more aware of the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the results of those gifts (the fruits) in your life.

- What is one specific way you can pray more this week?
- What is one way you can seek Peace this week (go for a walk outside, spend less time on social media, watch less news, pray, get more sleep, etc.)?
- Saint Teresa of Calcutta (Mother Teresa) tells us to do small acts, with great love. Do a small act with great love every day this week.

Closing Prayer:

Pray to be a bearer of God’s peace and love.

WEEK 7 READING PLAN					
Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6-7
Acts 24:1-23	Acts 24:24-25:22	Acts 25:23-26:32	Acts 27:1-28:10	Acts 28:11-31	Rest, celebrate Sunday

CONCLUSION

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

Acts 1:8

The Rest of the Story:

As our journey through the Acts of the Apostles draws to a close, you'll notice that the Book of Acts does not end in a grand finale. In fact, we are left without details of the remainder of Peter's and Paul's ministries and time on earth. Christian tradition holds that both Peter and Paul were martyred in Rome. According to tradition, Peter asked to be crucified upside down because he did not feel worthy to die in the same manner as Jesus, and Paul was beheaded because his Roman citizenship did not permit his crucifixion.



The word "witness" stems from the Greek word "martyr," which is the root of the word "martyr." While we may not be called to be martyrs in the ultimate sense as Peter and Paul were, we are called to "die to ourselves" on a daily basis in order to be more effective witnesses to the Good News of Jesus Christ. Just as the apostles were commissioned to be witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth, we are called to be witnesses in our homes and families, in our parishes, workplaces, neighborhoods and communities, and wherever God calls us to go.

The same Holy Spirit that descended upon the Apostles in the Upper Room at Pentecost has been given to each of us. That same power and those same gifts and fruits of the Spirit are available to us today. The Acts of the Apostles draws to a close without a neat and tidy ending because the story isn't over yet! We are writing the rest of the story with our lives. Like Peter and Paul and all the disciples of the early Church, God calls each of us to say "yes" to His invitation to take up our role in His story, to be witnesses to Jesus Christ, and to *"Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord!"* How will you continue the story?

FOR REFLECTION:

- How will this journey through the Acts of the Apostles help you be more open to the promptings, guidance, and power of the Holy Spirit?
- What new or renewed commitment will you make to enhance your prayer life?
- In what ways will you continue to be strengthened by your faith community?
- What new "mission field" is God calling you to explore and serve?
- What are some ways you can "Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord"?

LET US PRAY:

Heavenly Father, we thank You for this opportunity to journey through the great adventure of the Acts of the Apostles. Today, we make a renewed commitment to live as Your faithful disciples. We pray that You would grace us with a fresh and mighty outpouring of Your Holy Spirit. May we, like the disciples of the early Church, be ever more aware of Your presence and power in our lives. May we be bold witnesses to Your extravagant love, boundless mercy, miraculous healing, and saving grace. May we spread Your Good News to the ends of the earth. We pray all this through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

Amen.



The Holy Spirit's Role in Our Lives:

When the time for Pentecost was fulfilled, they were all in one place together. And suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house in which they were. Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them. And they were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim.

Acts 2:1-4

At the Ascension, Jesus reminds us that He would not be leaving us without support: “you will receive the power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you” (Acts 1:8). Jesus promises us great gifts when we are open to receiving the Holy Spirit. Though the Holy Spirit is the source of the gifts which help us live virtuously, developing a relationship with the Spirit is a gift in itself. Our prayer lives can include knowing the Holy Spirit—just as we pray to God the Father, Jesus the Son, or for the intercession of Mary and the Saints. Fostering a relationship with the Holy Spirit helps us feel and act on the promptings of God, and move according to His will.

Each of us received the traditional seven gifts of the Holy Spirit at our Baptism. At Confirmation our choice to stand up for our faith, in the presence of God and community, reawakened those same gifts. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are practical tools to help us live virtuous lives. As Jesus tells us, these gifts are given to us for our use and for us to give to others. When we pray and listen to God's will for us, we can accept these gifts and use them to produce fruit. The fruits of the Holy Spirit are the results that come from using the gifts that God gives us. They are proof of actions taken in line with God's will and with the movement of the Holy Spirit. Listed on the next page are the traditional gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit.



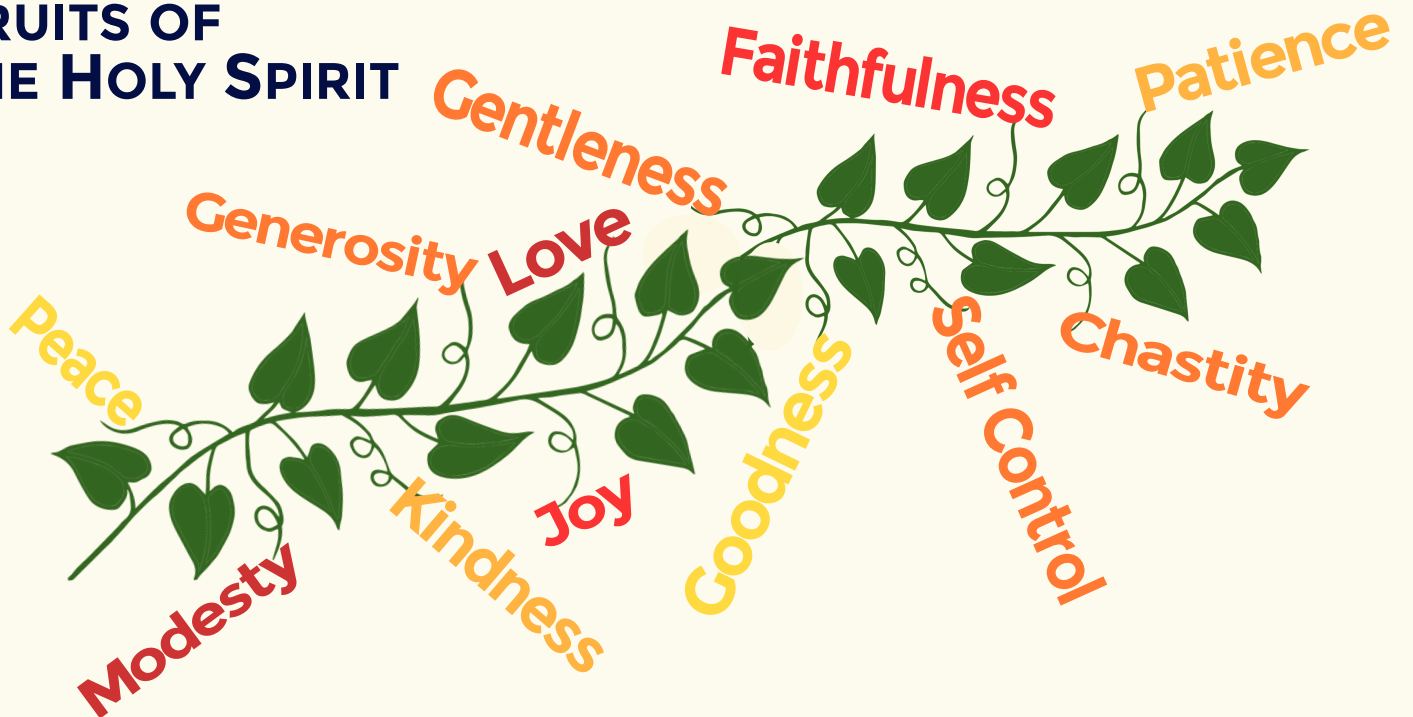
The Holy Spirit inspires us in ways beyond these seven gifts. As we witnessed at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-13), those who received the Holy Spirit were able to be understood by everyone present, regardless of their native language. Today the Holy Spirit continues to give us the words and the means to “Go and announce the Gospel”. The Spirit also leads us to rest deeply in God's presence, to recognize God in and around us, to discern effectively, to be the hands, feet, and face of Christ, and so much more!

When we develop a relationship with God, in the Spirit, we readily receive His grace. Let us keep in mind that, regardless of the gifts we sense at work in our lives, the greatest gift of all is the relationship we have with the giver of all the gifts!

GIFTS OF



FRUITS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT



A life in the Spirit produces abundant fruits. Paul names nine of them in Galatians 5:22-23. The tradition of the Church Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) 1832, lists the twelve Fruits of the Holy Spirit shown in this graphic.

WEEK 1 READING PLAN

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6-7
Acts 1:1-11	Acts 1:12-26	Acts 2:1-13	Acts 1:1-26	Acts 2:1-13	Rest, celebrate Sunday

WEEK 2 READING PLAN

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6-7
Acts 2:14-42	Acts 2:43-3:26	Acts 4:1-31	Acts 4:32-5:42	Acts 6:1-8:3	Rest, celebrate Sunday

WEEK 3 READING PLAN

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6-7
Acts 8:4-25	Acts 8:26-40	Acts 9:1-22	Acts 9:23-31	Acts 9:32-43	Rest, celebrate Sunday

WEEK 4 READING PLAN

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6-7
Acts 10-11:18	Acts 11:19-13:3	Acts 13:4-52	Acts 14:1-28	Acts 15:1-35	Rest, celebrate Sunday

WEEK 5 READING PLAN

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6-7
Acts 15:36-16:5	Acts 16:6-15	Acts 16:16-17:9	Acts 17:10-34	Acts 18:1-22	Rest, celebrate Sunday

WEEK 6 READING PLAN

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6-7
Acts 18:23-19:41	Acts 20:1-38	Acts 21:1-36	Acts 21:37-22:29	Acts 22:30-23:35	Rest, celebrate Sunday

WEEK 7 READING PLAN

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6-7
Acts 24:1-23	Acts 24:24-25:22	Acts 25:23-26:32	Acts 27:1-28:10	Acts 28:11-31	Rest, celebrate Sunday

MASS READINGS DURING THE EASTER SEASON:

Throughout the Easter Season, our first readings during Mass primarily come from the Acts of the Apostles. The table below shows the Mass readings as they correspond to the reading plans laid out in this resource. You can follow along the daily Mass readings every day at saintbrigidparish.org/weekly-readings or at the Laudate app.

Mass Date — 2024 (Year B)	Mass Date—Liturgically	1st Reading at Mass	Resource Week & Day	Summary
March 31	Easter Sunday	Acts 10:34,37-43	W4, D1	Peter's speech
April 1	Monday, Easter Octave	Acts 2:14,22-23	W2, D1	Peter's speech at Pentecost
April 2	Tuesday, Easter Octave	Acts 2:36-41	W2, D1	Peter's speech at Pentecost, continued
April 3	Wednesday, Easter Octave	Acts 3:1-10	W2, D2	Cure of crippled beggar
April 4	Thursday, Easter Octave	Acts 3:11-26	W2, D2	Peter's speech
April 5/21	Friday, Easter Octave	Acts 4:1-12	W2, D3	Peter and John before the Sanhedrin
April 6	Saturday, Easter Octave	Acts 4:13-21	W2, D2	Before the Sanhedrin, continued
April 7	Divine Mercy Sunday	Acts 4:32-35	W2, D4	Life in the Christian community
April 8	Solemnity of the Annunciation			1st reading not in Acts
April 9	Tuesday, 2nd Week of Easter	Acts 4:32-37	W2, D4	Life in the Christian community
April 10	Wednesday, 2nd Week of Easter	Acts 5:17-26	W2, D4	Trial before the Sanhedrin
April 11	Thursday, 2nd Week of Easter	Acts 5:27-33	W2, D4	Trial before the Sanhedrin, continued
April 12	Friday, 2nd Week of Easter	Acts 5:34-42	W2, D4	Trial before the Sanhedrin, continued
April 13	Saturday, 2nd Week of Easter	Acts 6:1-7	W2, D5	The need for assistants
April 14	Sunday, 3rd Week of Easter	Acts 3:13-15, 17-19	W2, D2	Peter's speech at Pentecost
April 15	Monday, 3rd Week of Easter	Acts 6:8-15	W2, D5	Accusation against Stephen
April 16	Tuesday, 3rd Week of Easter	Acts 7:5-8:1	W2, D5	Stephen's Martyrdom
April 17	Wednesday, 3rd Week of Easter	Acts 8:1-8	W2, D5 W3, D1	Persecution of the Church
April 18	Thursday, 3rd Week of Easter	Acts 8:26-40	W3, D2	Phillip and the Ethiopian
April 19	Friday, 3rd Week of Easter	Acts 9:1-20	W3, D3	Saul's Conversion and Baptism
April 20	Saturday, 3rd Week of Easter	Acts 9:31-42	W3, D5	Peter heals Aeneas; restores Tabitha
April 5/21	Sunday, 4th Week of Easter	Acts 4:8-12	W2, D3	Peter and John before the Sanhedrin
April 22	Monday, 4th Week of Easter	Acts 11:1-18	W4, D1	Baptism of Gentiles explained
April 23	Tuesday, 4th Week of Easter	Acts 11:19-26	W4, D2	The Church at Antioch
April 24	Wednesday, 4th Week of Easter	Acts 12:24-13:5	W4, D2	1st Mission of Paul and Barnabas
April 25	Feast of St. Mark, Evangelist			1st reading not in Acts

Mass Date— 2021 (Year B)	Mass Date—Liturgically	1st Reading at Mass	Resource Week & Day	Summary
April 26	Friday, 4th Week of Easter	Acts 13:26-33	W4, D3	Paul's address in the synagogue, cntd.
April 27	Saturday, 4th Week of Easter	Acts 13:44-52	W4, D3	Address to the Gentiles
April 28	Sunday, 5th Week of Easter	Acts 9:26-31	W3, D4	Paul visits Jerusalem
April 29	Monday, 5th Week of Easter; Feast of St. Catherine of Siena	Acts 14:5-18	W4, D4	Paul and Barnabas at Iconium and Lystra
April 30	Tuesday, 5th Week of Easter	Acts 14:19-28	W4, D4	End of Paul's first mission
May 1	Wednesday, 5th Week of Easter	Acts 15:1-6	W4, D5	Council of Jerusalem
May 2	Thursday, 5th Week of Easter	Acts 15:7-21	W4, D5	Council of Jerusalem, continued
May 3	Friday, 5th Week of Easter; Feast of St. Philip and James			1st reading not in Acts
May 4	Saturday, 5th Week of Easter	Acts 16:1-10	W5, D2	Paul in Lycaonia and Asia Minor
May 5	Sunday, 6th Week of Easter	Acts 10:25-26, 34- 35, 44-48	W4, D1	Vision of Peter; Peter's speech; Baptism of Cornelius
May 6	Monday, 6th Week of Easter	Acts 16:11-15	W5, D2	Paul into Europe
May 7	Tuesday, 6th Week of Easter	Acts 16:22-34	W5, D3	Imprisonment ; deliverance from prison
May 8	Wednesday, 6th Week of Easter	Acts 17:15, 22-18:1	W5, D4/5	Paul's speech at the Areopagus
May 9	Thursday, 6th Week of Easter	Acts 18:1-8	W5, D5	Paul in Corinth
May 10	Friday, 6th Week of Easter	Acts 18:9-18	W5, D5	Paul in Corinth, continued
May 11	Saturday, 6th Week of Easter	Acts 18:23-28	W6, D1	Apollos
May 12	The Ascension of the Lord	Acts 1:1-11	W1, D1	Ascension of Jesus
May 13	Monday, 7th Week of Easter	Acts 19:1-8	W6, D1	Paul in Ephesus
May 14	Tuesday, 7th Week of Easter; Feast of Saint Matthias	Acts 1:15-17, 20-27	W1, D2	The choice of Judas' Successor
May 15	Wednesday, 7th Week of Easter	Acts 20:28-38	W6, D2	Farewell speech in Miletus, continued
May 16	Thursday, 7th Week of Easter	Acts 22:30, 23:6-11	W6, D5	Paul before the Sanhedrin
May 17	Friday, 7th Week of Easter	Acts 25:13-21	W7, D2	Paul before King Agrippa
May 18	Saturday, 7th Week of Easter	Acts 28:16-20, 30-31	W7, D5	Paul's testimony to Jews in Rome
May 19	Pentecost	Acts 2:1-11	W1, D3	The Coming of the Spirit

SOURCES:

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Maps—freebibleimages.org/illustrations/bj-paul-maps/

Content—This Scripture-based resource was compiled by the Saint Brigid Parish Communications Team, with some questions adapted from Ignatius Catholic Study Bible.



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