

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Martyrdom of James. Peter imprisoned

12 ¹About that time King Herod decided to persecute some members of the Church. ²He had James, the brother of John, killed with the sword, ³and when he saw how it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also.

This happened during the festival of the Unleavened Bread. ⁴Herod had him seized and thrown into prison with four squads, each of four soldiers, to guard him. He wanted to bring him to trial before the people after the Passover feast, ⁵but while Peter was kept in prison, the whole Church prayed earnestly for him.

⁶On the very night before Herod was to bring him to trial, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound by a double chain, while guards kept watch at the gate of the prison.

⁷Suddenly an angel of the Lord stood there and a light shone in the prison cell. The angel tapped Peter on the side and woke him saying:

—Get up quickly!

At once the chains fell from Peter's wrists. The angel said:

—Put on your belt and your sandals.

Peter did so, ⁸and the angel added:

—Now, put on your cloak and follow me.

⁹Peter followed him out; yet he did not realize that what was happening with the angel was real; he thought he was seeing a vision. ¹⁰They passed the first guard and then the second and they came to the iron door leading out to the city, which opened of itself for them. They went out and made their way down a narrow alley, when suddenly the angel left him.

¹¹Then Peter recovered his senses and said:

—Now I know that the Lord has sent his angel and has rescued me from Herod's clutches and from all that the Jews had in store for me.

¹²Peter then found his bearings and came to the house of Mary, the mother of John also known as Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying. ¹³When he knocked at the outside door, a maid named Rhoda came to answer it. ¹⁴On recognizing the voice of Peter she was so overcome with joy that, instead of opening the door, she ran in to announce that Peter was at the door. ¹⁵They said to her:

—You are crazy!

And as she insisted, they said:

—It must be his angel.

¹⁶Meanwhile, Peter continued knocking and, when they finally opened the door, they were amazed to see him. ¹⁷He motioned to them with his hand to be quiet and told them how the Lord had brought him out of prison. And he said to them:

—Report this to James and to the brothers.

Then he left and went to another place.

¹⁸At daybreak there was a great commotion among the soldiers over what had become of Peter. ¹⁹Herod began a search for him and, not finding him, had the guards questioned and executed. After that, he came down from Judea to Caesarea and stayed there.

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