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Examples of  
Discerning Leadership  
and Community for  
Mission in the Acts of  
the Apostles (Acts 1-6;  
Acts 10-15)

Jesus Christ and the progress of Christian mission from Jerusalem to Rome. At every stage of this development is the action of the Holy Spirit that guides the apostles and the community of believers to discern the paths to mission. This paper will focus first on the responses of Peter, the Apostles and the earliest community of believers in Jerusalem (Acts 1-6) to the guiding light of the Holy Spirit. A fitting introduction to this part is a brief exposition on the coming of the Holy Spirit on the community gathered in Jerusalem (Acts 2) in the light of the promise of the Risen Lord Jesus in Luke 24:44-49 and His Ascension (Luke 24:50-53; Acts 1:6-11). This will serve as a background to the discussion on the discerning leadership of Peter and the Apostles and the shaping of the community of believers as a community for mission faced with challenges of change and threats of persecution. The preaching and martyrdom of Stephen and the evangelizing ministry of Philip and Peter even with the dispersion of the disciples from Jerusalem reveal the continuing work of the Holy Spirit in the life and growth of the community of believers. The second part of the paper will focus on the opening to the Gentile mission in the story of the conversion of Cornelius and his household through the preaching of Peter (Acts 10) and the questions raised on this issue. The story of Saul's conversion (Acts 9), his acceptance, because of the support of Barnabas, by the apostles and believers in Jerusalem despite their initial mistrust, and the growing number of Gentile converts through the missionary efforts of Paul as Barnabas' partner in spreading the Word of God lead to the question of the admission of non-Jews to the Christian community (Acts 11; 13-15). How the Jerusalem Council resolves this question (Acts 15) by listening to the experiences and insights of Peter, Paul and Barnabas, and discerning the direction of the Holy Spirit and the will of God is truly instructive for