

EASTER 5
Acts 6:1-7
1 Peter 2:4-9
Jn 14:1-12

The Church's mission began at Pentecost and as it expanded the Apostles continued to focus on teaching and preaching while others were delegated to take care of the needs of the faithful. St Stephen, the first Christian martyr who was granted a vision of his heavenly home during his martyrdom, was one of these deacons.

Home is a place of safety and rest and where we can be ourselves. Our spiritual home is just as important as our worldly home and Jesus is aware of this. He does not want us to be safe by retreating *from* the world, but to be safe *in* the world as we carry out his mission. When preparing his disciples to continue his mission after the resurrection, Jesus told them that he was going to prepare a place for them in his Father's house, so they would be with him again. He told them that they knew the way that he was going. Thomas quickly pointed out that if they didn't know where he was going they could not know the way.

Jesus responded, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life" (Jn 14:6). He doesn't say, I am *one* way to God and I *reveal* the truth and *demonstrate* life. He is **the** way to God and truth is found **in** him because he **is** the life of God himself. To know Jesus is to know the Father. Jesus is Christ-like. The Way is involvement with Jesus. We do not travel *from* Jesus to God; we travel *with* Jesus in the truth and life of God because God is the true home of those who persevere to the end. Christianity is not a religion of a book, it is a relationship with a person. Christianity is not living life according to a particular moral code. Christians live according to a moral and ethical code *because* they *are* Christians, not in order to become Christians. The mission of Christian disciples is greater in scope than Jesus' earthly ministry but is dependent on him.

The epistle of Peter was written to those converts preparing for baptism and he describes the Church as a building with Jesus the cornerstone holding it together. Jesus is the High Priest of God's chosen race, royal priesthood and holy nation of the baptised.

Within this holy nation the Church, each member has an equal and vital role to play. Equal and important does not mean that the various roles and ministries are interchangeable. Neither does it mean that everyone has the right to do everything. Pope Emeritus Benedict thinks that these claims are the heresies of modern humanistic ideologies. Pope St John II emphasised that the ordained and lay ministries complement each other. The secular heresy of equating equality with flexible sameness flows from the quest for power and control. Sadly it is alive and well in some sections of the Church with calls for the laity to have a greater voice and power in the management of the Church.

While some priests as benevolent or not so benevolent, dictators in the Church, my personal observation is that those ministries that are predominately lay controlled are more likely to loosen their Catholic identity. Last week the Vatican ordered 15 psychiatric hospitals run by a lay dominated Board on behalf of the Brothers of Charity in Belgium to cease to identify as Catholic institutions because the board allows the euthanasia of the mentally sick patients

contrary to Catholic teaching. Over the past decades, various popes have warned that the trend towards the declericalisation of the clergy and the clericalization of the laity leads to a re-writing of the belief and teaching of the Church. The blurring of boundaries between ministries does not promote the Church's mission.

The Church is not a corporation, it is the mystical Body of Christ in the world. Jesus prayed that his disciples might be in the Father and in him "so that the world may believe that the Father had sent him" (Jn 17:21).

As we approach Pentecost and the Catholic Church in this country prepares for the Plenary Council next year, let us pray that there may be an awakening of all laity and clergy who hold, believe and teach the Faith as revealed to the Church through Jesus in the power of the Spirit in order to witness to Jesus the Agent of God in the world.

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