

Ascension Sunday

24th May 2020

Reflection

In today's Gospel we hear Jesus commissioning the Apostles for the last time. In his final words to the Apostles he gives them the mandate to "go and make disciples baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." These words provide the Church its missionary pulse and energy. Since that day, the Church has been true to these words making Christians or disciples through the Sacrament of Baptism. Baptism is the Sacrament by which Christians are made and become members of the Church and citizens of heaven. By the very formula given by the Lord, we can appreciate that through Baptism we are introduced into a relationship that is not ours to by our own effort but given to us as pure gift – that is, the communion of the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Baptism gives us a new dignity – the dignity of being a son and a daughter of the God in Christ. In addition to that we receive the what the Church calls, the 'triple munera' of Jesus – that of being **Priest, Prophet and King**. Through baptism we share in the priestly, prophetic and kingly mission of Jesus. Jesus is our High Priest. He is our Teacher and he is our King. He intercedes for us, offered himself for us and makes us holy. He teaches us truthfully. His kingship is not of this world. It is a kingship of service.

St Peter reminds us *"you are a chosen race, a kingdom of priests, a holy nation, a people to be a personal possession to sing the praises of God who called you out of the darkness into his*

wonderful light (1 Peter 2:9)." It is through Baptism that we are immersed into the *Communion* of this Chosen People of God. The baptised share in this a '*Common Priesthood,*' a '*Common Prophetic Mission,*' a '*Common Kingship*'. Through the Common Priesthood of the Baptised Faithful each person is able to participate in the prayer of Christ who "*during his life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission* (Hebrew 5:7)." Again the Letter to the Hebrews assures us that "*It follows, then, that his power to save those who come to God through him is absolute, since he lives for ever to intercede for them* (Hebrew 7:25)."

Just as he did on earth, the Risen Lord he makes intercession for us at the right hand side of the Father in heaven. The dignity of our Baptism *immerses us*' into the prayer of Jesus. *Through, with and in Jesus,* a Christian makes intercession to the Father, offering prayers and supplications on behalf of the world to him who alone can save us from death. The efficacy of our prayers is not dependant on us who fall easily into disobedience and human frailty but through the merits and power of Christ himself. This is Divine Worship. Ultimately the Church worships God in the Sacred Liturgy. The Sacred Liturgy is the Prayer of Church. The Sacred Liturgy of the Church is the work of God and '*not our work.*' Prayer and worship is at the centre of the Church' s being. It is central to her identity and mission. The pulsating heart of the Church is the Eucharist. The Holy Spirit is the Soul of the Church vivifying her from within. It is the Holy Spirit who teaches us to pray to the One Truly Present among us in the Eucharist. This is why the Church values Eucharistic Adoration. Before the Spirit

leads us into evangelical outreach and mission, he leads us first to the Risen Lord our Master. It is him who opens our hearts and eyes to be able to recognise him in the poor and the needy.

I hope what we have reflected on thus far can help us appreciate the gift of the ministerial priesthood. Catholic priests are ordained to be at the service of the *priestly, prophetic and kingly mission of the Church*. They are given the responsibility to *lead the people in worship and prayer, teach the faith truthfully* with love. Priests are urged by the Church to lead the flock after the heart of the Good Shepherd who came *to serve and not to be served and gave his life a ransom for many* (Matt 20:28).

Priests live out their vocation in the various ministries they are appointed to. For a Diocesan Priest, he is usually given the mandate to lead the flock in worship, instruct them in the faith and serves them in holy living in a parish community. For a Diocesan Priest, the locus of his mission as Priest, Prophet and King is in his parish. It is there that he offers the One True Sacrifice for the Church and the world. It is there that he lives out his mission to teach in the person of Christ Jesus the Priest, Prophet and King. In his parish and/or ministry a priest serves the souls entrusted to his care offering them always the balm of the healing presence of Christ.

For the lay faithful, you live your baptismal mission as *priest, prophet and king* most importantly in the family. For example it was beautiful to hear families praying the Rosary together on Zoom. Private prayer, family prayer and Public prayer (the Mass) are opportunities whereby we participate in the prayer of Jesus who prays in our hearts and in the community of the Church. The

Church and/or you and I, can only pray because it is Jesus who prays within his people.

Each day you dear parents live out your prophetic mission by teaching your children the teachings of Jesus in the home by your words, love and example. This is irreplaceable and non-negotiable. In your vocation in Christian marriage you sanctify your children by bringing them up in the practice of the faith which you promised on the day of their baptism.

Because of today' s Gospel, you and I should take the opportunity to remember to pray for the priest that baptised us. Thank God for the faith of your parents who brought you in their arms to the waters of Baptism not forgetting the love and support of god parents. What a beautiful thing is to be baptised in Christ for through it we receive the theological virtues of faith, hope and love. Faith inspires our prayer. Hope strengthens our commitment. Loves grounds us in humility.

When we look at the bigger picture we can see that the place of a priest and his role is irreplaceable. A priest is called by God to be the heart of Jesus among his people. Thus Jesus is made known and loved through *Prayer, through Preaching and Administration of the Sacraments*.

Looking at the bigger picture we can see that the role and mission of the lay faithful is irreplaceable because you are able to make Jesus known and loved *24/7 in the home, in the workplace, at the markets, or supermarkets* etc. Wherever you are, there prayer is

offered, a Gospel truth is proclaimed and a good deed is done in the name of Jesus our Lord.