

Fifth Sunday of Easter – 10th May 2020

The Acts of the Apostles is the go to place in the Bible to see the actions of the Holy Spirit within the ever growing and expanding community of The Way – the disciples and Apostles have been praying together and sharing their goods in common for a while now. The Acts of the Apostles is also the go to place to see, several times, that the newly founded community of The Way is not without its faults.

Today we see that certain people within the community are being overlooked when it comes to the daily distributions, of food, one assumes. These being the Greek speaking widows – hence, those on the margins in three ways - as women, as Greek speakers and as those who have no one to support them as they are widows. The most vulnerable have become invisible in this early Christian Community – this community is not perfect as we would hope it would be, but which community is perfect? The important thing is that once an injustice is recognised, action is taken to find a solution, and hopefully change the way of thinking of those who have caused the injustice, or allowed the injustice to exist.

The Apostles call a meeting (!), but thankfully this meeting has a solution for all parties. It would appear that things are drastically changed in terms of personnel and justice. The new personnel have to meet certain criteria: to be of good reputation, be filled with the Holy Spirit and with wisdom – wow, how amazing would that be if all those in authority had those three gifts! The gift of discernment is what has been used by the Apostles and the community in choosing these men – and again how amazing would that be if those in authority had the gift of discernment, for then the world surely would be a better place for all, and not just for some.

The use of these gifts of the Holy Spirit in a correct way has a great purpose as we see – it further allows the spread of the Word of the Lord, and it allows time for those who are called to prayer, in a particular way, to have the time to pray.

As we see in St Peter's Letter, indeed we are all called in a general way to be people of prayer and to be at service to the Word of the Lord; for we *are a chosen race, a royal priesthood and consecrated nation, a people set apart*. So does this mean that we are more special or deserve more daily distributions than other people? No! It means that we are given certain tasks to offer to the Lord and to others. St Peter tells us that we are set apart, 'to sing the praises of God,' and hence, to be people of prayer. He further tell us that we are called to be living stones of faith, to build up the 'spiritual house' of God – this spiritual house in today's context and readings is to be a place of safety and justice for all – a place where all may come and be accepted, and fed – fed physically and spiritually; for it is then that we are living out our calling to be *a chosen race, a royal priesthood and consecrated nation, a people set apart*.

And why are we in particular called to be at service to the Lord and prayer? Again St Peter reminds us, that we have been, 'called out of the darkness into this wonderful light,' the light that is not just a physical blessing from the sun's rays but a deeper and more profound blessing from the rays of the LORD Jesus' love for you and me. He has set us free from sin and death – in all its contexts. Once we have been blessed then we should want to share this blessing with all that we come into contact with, even with the Greek speaking widows of our society, whoever they might be for us as individuals and as a society!! For they too are caught up in this wonderful spiritual house which has Jesus Christ as its cornerstone - The living Stone - chosen by and precious to God – and we are invited to set ourselves and others close to Him, for He neither rejects nor overlooks anyone!

So we too are called to be careful that we do not overlook those in our midst who have become invisible and without a room to go to. For there are many rooms in my Father's House Jesus tells us in our Gospel. A house where God The Father and Jesus are perfectly aligned – they are, with the Holy Spirit, the One Spiritual House - The holy Trinity – where all are welcomed, fed and accepted. And how do we enter this One Spiritual House? Well Jesus gives us the answer, for He is the Answer as He tells us, 'I am The Way, The Truth and the Life. It is by aligning or setting ourselves close to Jesus the living stone that we participate in the 'wonderful light' and hopefully become an attractive beacon of hope for those who are overlooked or are caught up in the darkness of spiritual sin or worldly injustice.

Let us not be afraid or coy, but rather let the Light of Christ shine out from us, for it is then that we bring justice into the world – the justice that is not a process but a Person – Jesus Christ the Living Stone who knew rejection and yet Loved in return. We too are called to do nothing less, for Jesus says, 'I tell you most solemnly, whoever believes in me will perform the same works as I do myself, he will perform even greater works, because I am going to the Father.' What a great commissioning and a great privilege we have been given – chosen not because we are special but because we believe and hence chosen to perform tasks for the Lord and for others. Let us sing praises to The Lord today and every day, by the way we live and love and show justice to others.