

TRINITY NEWS

Pentecost XIII The Choice of Staying or Going Away

So Jesus asked the twelve, "Do you also want to go away?" Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God" (John 6:68-69). This follows the comment of the writer that many of Jesus' disciples turned back because of his talk about being the Manna from heaven himself and his direct linking of Abba with the call to follow him. It is in this gospel that Jesus says, "I and the Father are one" (10:30). This was unacceptable to some of those who had followed him, and they left.

Christian faith is from **within Jesus from within the Gospels**. Those who left still believed in God. Atheism was not really an option in Jesus' audience and it wasn't an option for him. This discussion given in shorthand in our text was not about whether to believe in God. That wasn't really a first-century option in Palestine, though we have Epicurus and others appearing among the Greeks and elsewhere in the centuries around the time of Jesus. It was Jesus branding himself as having direct access to Abba Father and his implied co-relation with Abba which caused the muttering and dissent and withdrawal. So Jesus turned to his disciples and said, "Do you also want to go away?"

This question from Jesus is current for us right now when we are daily assailed with a multitude of 'spiritualities' on the internet. Some appeal to our wants rather than our real needs. They promise rapid-fire solutions and fantastic results. That is, whatever we ask and believe that the Universe will give, it will give to us. It is taught in one way or another that what we desire we can have from this Source. It is not often called God but the function is the same: "Ask and it will be given you; seek and you shall find; knock and it will be opened to you" (Matthew 7:7). This text gets quoted with approval by non-Christian sources such as The Secret and others. The issue is that what they state has some truth in it. "Whatever someone sows, they will also reap". What we prophesy does tend to come to pass, be it good or bad. The responses have been varied, given the decline of main stream religions in the West, though not in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

One comes from a brilliant and creative thinker who is the head of a semi-monastic community in Melbourne unaligned with main stream "Churchianity" as he calls it, though he is still referred to as Abbot. Stephen has been a Catholic priest and an Anglican priest and still is because Orders are indelible. He writes of a "new Christianity being born" which sounds very much like the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth in 21st century language and cultural 'dress'. **It struggles for language and rites of passage; it shuns structure and assumptions of superiority; it is centred on the person and not the institution; it has a more holistic and healthier view of how to read sacred texts; it has more in**

common with “team humanity” than “team church”; it is far more focused on the here and now rather than the life to come; it is open to the insights of all sincere people who endeavour to lead a moral and ethical life, without requiring a religious ‘brand’. This sounds like the agenda of Jesus of Nazareth, though I doubt if Jesus was as confident as my ‘spiritual son’ Stephen about the capacities of “team humanity” to maintain all the openness and integrated compassion cited in his gleanings of what is emerging.

I try to embody a lot of what Abbot +Stephen sees in the mirror his mind. But I do it in the Church that I love, focused on all that comes from within Christ and from within the Gospels which reveal his inner heart if we can but see. “Here I stand”, as some else said once at a time of great change and I hope that you do in your own way.

Bishop Arthur Jones

THIS WEEK:

Wednesday.

- Bible study, 10:00am.
- Group Discussion, 7:30pm, Parish Office

Thursday.

- Midweek Eucharist, 10:00am, Chapel.

NEXT WEEK'S READINGS:

Deuteronomy 4:1-9; Psalm 15; Ephesians 6:10-20; Mark 7:1-8,14-15,21-23

SUNDAY SCHOOL STARTS on September 6. Registration forms are available at the church entrance.
