

THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER

A CHURCH OF PRAYER AND SERVICE

1st Reading: Acts 6:1-7 2nd Reading: 1 Peter 2:4-9 John 14:1-12

The story from the Acts of the Apostles shows how needed changes were introduced, in the church's early days. The *Hellenists* (converts whose main language was Greek), complained that their widows were not getting a fair share of the Jerusalem community's social services.

Their solution has two sides: prayer and service. Prayer and preaching were to be the primary duties of the apostles while the vital service to the widows and the needy in the community was to be entrusted in other members of the community. So, the apostles appointed seven trusted men to attend to service, and initiated them by an ordination ceremony, the laying-on of hands.

At the same time our individual Christian vocation requires a balance between the two. Each of us is called to the prayer of the apostles and, we as individuals, are also called to the service of the seven trusted men. No matter what we do in life, we should be of some service to our neighbours; and no task we do for others is a menial task.

The drama of Jesus life swung between these two solid arms of service and prayer or the other way around. Often times, we even see Jesus escaping from service to connect with his father. That's why by pronouncing himself to Thomas as the way, the truth and the life Jesus is telling us that he is the cornerstone of our operations in within the church community as well as individual Christians. It suffices to take note of the discussion between Thomas and Jesus as taking place soon after the washing of the feet of the apostles and before Jesus and his disciples go into silent prayer in the garden. Jesus plainly shows us that the Kingdom of God is a place of service and a prayer.

Prayer is not necessarily ceremony or words, but a direct communication with God – communication of 'a being with Being.' Such a communication necessitated Jesus in saying 'I am in the Father and the Father is in me.' One of the problems of public religious exercises is our tendency to turn it into crowd-pleasing and theatre. This rarely translates into service. Real personal prayer, where the soul is immersed in its God, can be a powerful springboard of service to neighbour.