



***Second Sunday of Easter***

***Acts 2:42-47 1Peter 1:3-9 John 20: 19-31***

Praise be to God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.  
who brings us to birth in hope  
with a life that comes from the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

This prayer is from the letter of Peter and is addressed to “scattered strangers”. The “strangers” is used with reference to geographical distance. The assumption is that if they were to meet they would have a lot in common. The kinship they share is their sibling relationship in Jesus Christ, the Risen One, Light and Life to all.

The people who were the first generation of the Christian community were confronted by a call from God to do something radically different. They were being called to form and be part of a group that had no foundation in race, gender or economic position.

Traditionally each tribe, nation or racial group followed its own tribal gods. Religion was another barrier like politics and culture. Through the example and message of Jesus, the disciples began to learn that God was the god of all. They preached what they came to believe that all peoples were the beloved of God, slave or freeborn, woman and man, Jew and Gentile.

We know from history that the ideal of unity in Christ has not been achieved, and that Christians themselves have thrown up boundaries, caused divisions and even used violence in the false claim that one cultural expression of the Gospel is better than another.

The reading from Acts reminds us of the essentials of Christian living, our measuring tape.

The first essential named is the apostles’ instruction. Today we name this as our education in faith. We cannot live as vibrant Christians, colouring the world, if our knowledge of the Scriptures and tradition is stuck in the time zone of our First Communion or Confirmation. Vatican II called us to make adult education a priority.

The second essential is the common life. This does not mean living together but thinking and acting communally. For this reason Christians have worked since the beginning to better world conditions, through education, health and science. In deed a Christian community that has no outreach can hardly be called Christian. For Jesus everyone he met was kin. For us the same applies, the concerns of one neighbour are our concerns. Our stance is one of hospitality to all.

The third essential is the “breaking of the bread”. This is what we now call Eucharist. Vatican II called the Eucharist, the source and summit of our lives. The place from which we draw the water of life, and the peak from which we learn to view the world. We gather to remember that we are one people, we listen so that we can be formed as a people, we give thanks to God for the blessings received and we recognise that we too will be broken and poured out in service of others.

The fourth essential is prayer. Originally this was attending the temple for the set hours of prayer which Eucharist was celebrated at home. Today we speak of our spirituality rather than our prayer life. We are conscious that spirituality embraces all that makes us who we are as human. For us our spirituality is first and foremost Christian spirituality. It takes on the colours from our homeland and origins so we speak of Australian spirituality or Peruvian spirituality. It is also coloured by denomination or religious congregation. Christian spirituality is extraordinary diverse and rich.

This passage from Acts tells us that the community liked to eat together when it was possible and to share resources. This was a practical reminder of the real love that was to be a characteristic of the group. Christianity is a way of living for the health and happiness of the whole world. As God sent his Son, so the Son sends us, to bring this healing message of peace to the world.

Patricia Stevenson rsj.