



Fifth Sunday of Easter
† Sunday 14th May 2017

Cycle of Prayer: New Members of the Church
Keynote: The Royal and Priestly People of God

Acts of the Apostles 6: 1-7

Our reading from the *Acts* continues with a description of life in the early Christian church. In previous weeks, the community was presented as the ideal united, caring group of believers – sharing all in common – according to need. Now unexpectedly, there are factions! *‘About this time, when the number of disciples was increasing, the Hellenists made a complaint against the Hebrews: in the daily distribution, their own widows were being overlooked.’* Quite a healthy sign in some ways; these disciples were real people! So the Twelve call a meeting of all the faithful, *‘It would not be right for us to neglect the word of God so as to give out food; you must select from among yourselves seven men of good reputation, filled with the Holy Spirit and with wisdom, we will hand over this duty to them, and continue to devote ourselves to the service of the word.’* The community chose seven good men and true and present them to the apostles, *‘who prayed and laid their hands on them... and the word of the Lord continued to spread and the number of disciples... was greatly increased.’*

Responsorial Psalm 32 (33) – A psalm of praise in awe of the mighty God – Alleluia!

First Letter of Peter 2: 4-9

‘The Lord is the living stone, rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him, set yourselves close to him so that you too, the holy priesthood... may be living stones making a spiritual house.’ Peter is reminding the new converts about their unique and special character as the Chosen of God. *‘You are a chosen race,’* the apostle says, *‘a royal priesthood, a consecrated nation, a people set apart to sing the praises of God who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.’* These, the four traditional titles of the people of Israel in the Old Testament are now applied to the new People of God – this is the vocation of the Christian in the Church of the New Testament. Christ is *‘the cornerstone that I have chosen and the one who rests trust on it will not be disappointed... for you who are believers... the stone rejected by the builders has proved to be the keystone.’* There are I am sure many ways we might apply these thoughts to our lives as we deepen our faith and conversion to the way of Christ in this Paschal season.

Gospel according to John 14: 1-12

Here we have part of John’s account of what is called the Last Supper discourse. *‘Do not let your hearts be troubled,’* says Jesus, *‘trust in God still and trust in me.’* In a world apprehensive with neglect, violence and unbelief, these words carry a certainty and strength of meaning for the Christian disciple who would follow the Way. With the apostle Thomas we can say, *‘Lord, we do not know where you are going, so how can we know the way?’* Jesus’ reply to Thomas, is direct, *‘I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one can come to the Father except through me.’* In a nutshell then, *‘Trust in God still and trust in me.’* This is the vocation of the Christian Church, and of the individual believer. Together we are to be a sign of hope in the world – for, *‘I tell you,’* says Jesus, *‘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.’*