

Reflection Monday Lent 1 Chair of St Peter 2021

The feast of St Peter's Chair has been celebrated in Rome since the fourth century. It signifies the unity of the Church founded upon the Apostles. The confidence with which Jesus places full authority on St Peter is a mark of his trust and belief that Peter will fulfil his mission of caring for and nurturing the faithful of the Church. This happened well before Peter was to deny Jesus in the courtyard of the High Priest. It shows the trust and belief Jesus has in calling us to be his followers in baptism. We all share in the same belief and trust of Jesus and that is what unites us. As the Church evolves it is becoming clear that the care, nurturing and guidance of the Church is also a responsibility of the laity not just the clergy and bishops. We all share in the priesthood of Christ and therefore share in maintaining and safeguarding the faith of those around us. Today the laity are being called to take on more key management and governance roles in the Church. Pope Francis in his recent book *"Let us dream"* states quite clearly that women should be given more leadership roles in the Church because they are often better administrators of a Church whose mission is to help, inspire, encourage and motivate people to *Love God and Love neighbour*. Women are better administrators because of their empathy and compassion and their great ability to multifunction.

Last October Pope Francis called the laity to *"take a step forward"* in carrying out the Church's mission of evangelization. *"The time is now. The mission of the laity is not the privilege of a few, it involves total dedication. The laity are asked to be joyful in self-giving and prayer, to grow and to operate within the Christian community to share and support the mutual exchange of gifts aroused by the Holy Spirit."* He stressed the importance of *"the co-responsibility of the laity in building up the Church. If the heart of the priest's identity lies in consecrating the Eucharistic bread, the centre of the lay mission consists in consecrating the world according to God's plan. The ministries established carry out this dual mission in favour of the Church and the world, making the laity (women and men) active subjects of evangelization and mission.* The Pope called for a more synodal and outgoing Church but warned against *"clericalizing"* the laity because it was vital to recognize lay people's specific vocation. Avoid the risk of transforming ministries into forms of power. *"An entirely ministerial Church manifests a People with a thousand faces. It is a Church where the role of women is central. It is time for the laity to take a step forward, a step further. And find in the Church the necessary space to do so, a way to respond to their vocations. The Holy Spirit is always active in the People of God, enriching them with new gifts. We must be careful not to extinguish or discourage them."*