

## **Church Beyond Clergy: The Mission of the Baptised**

My previous parish had a secondary school called St. Joan of Arc. In 1431, St Joan was falsely put on trial by a bishop and a clerical court. She was condemned for heresy and witchcraft, and burned at the stake. It took over 20 years for the Church to reverse her conviction – a little too late! She was canonised in 1920. St Joan's church life, life of faith, her mission had to go beyond the clergy.

We too, the church, can mistakenly believe that power is *\*only\** given to clergy (bishops and priests) and religious. This can lead to a sense of frustration, and faith being irrelevant and meaningless in our daily lives at home, work, school, and out and about. In Jesus, you the baptised lay faithful have power! This is the message today: "Church Beyond Clergy: The Mission of the Baptised."

In the readings today, power was not just given to clergy. It was given to people without formal titles or roles. The church teaches that the power of God is not limited to clergy or religious – although we do have power! It teaches that all the baptised lay faithful are given power to continue Jesus' mission to make disciples (Mt 28:19), and help transform society.

**Speak** (prophecy) – Numbers: "Moses said...'If only the whole people of the Lord were prophets, and the Lord gave his Spirit to them all!'" 1 Cor. 14:3 defines prophesying as Holy Spirit inspired words that "strengthen, encourage, or comfort." In the Old Testament, the people of God were waiting for the gift of prophecy to be poured out on all believers. At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came down on all believers, giving them power to prophesy. Now you can be filled with the Holy Spirit to prophesy! When someone is feeling fragile, don't say words that weaken, but strengthen. When someone feels like giving up, don't speak words that make them lose heart, but encourage. When someone is feeling anxious, don't speak words

that cause them distress, but comfort. Pray for the Holy Spirit to help you \*speak\* words that “strengthen, encourage, and comfort.” Prophecy!

**Work** – Mark: “Do not stop anyone from working a miracle in my name.” Anyone can work a miracle in Jesus’ name. What have you got on this week that you would love to see a miracle in: at work, school, family, in a relationship? What 5 things would you see that would make that thing a miracle for you (even if a minor one)? We did the 1<sup>st</sup> session of alpha last week. The team prayed that guests would feel comfortable, loved, safe to share freely, laugh, and want to come back. The evening was even better than we had hoped for! I believe it was a miracle! Pray and work for a miracle to happen in your life. All can **\*work\*** miracles in Jesus’ name.

**Social transformation** – James: “The Lord hears the cries of those you have cheated.” God wants social justice and social transformation. In the ‘Our Father’, we pray “Thy kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven.” Don’t cheat people of their legal property, their dignity, their rightful role or job (at school or work), or spread gossip. Give people the good they deserve. Bringing justice brings **social transformation**.

Brothers and sisters, in Jesus, you are not powerless. In Jesus, at this Mass, you are given power! This bread and wine represent your surrendered life, especially the things in your life over which you feel powerless: wars, people, wounds, sins. Jesus will take them up to the Father. In the Eucharist, you will receive the power of Jesus, the Holy Spirit.

Filled with the Holy Spirit, together we all can empower people at work, in your family, at your school, in the supermarket, on the internet. Speak words that “strengthen, encourage, or comfort.” Think, pray, and work for a miracle this week. Give people the good they deserve for social transformation. Real power is not confined to clergy and religious only. God’s power is in you for mission.

## **Prayer**

Lord, thank you that you promise me and us power!

Jesus, I offer you all the times in my life when I feel powerless. Receive them in this bread and wine.

In exchange, in this Eucharist, give me and us, your power.

Power to speak.

Power to work for miracles.

Power to bring social justice and transformation.

We ask this in your holy name, amen!