

And so the Church gradually organises itself, or rather, allows itself to *be* organised by Christ. At first directly, as here with Thomas and Philip, and later more indirectly through the Spirit, as with the choosing of ‘deacons’ to serve the Greek-speaking widows. And learning is painful, or can be; it doesn’t come readily. We are accustomed to this way or that way of acting, seeing or believing; each in a silo of sorts, of past learning and inhibited, perhaps, by many past failures or choices which sent us this way rather than that. So we should have some sympathy for Thomas and Philip and the chaos of that early Church where mistakes are being readily made; it’s a symbol, in this instance, of the whole journey to God which, in this life, at least, never ends. And we see it so clearly now in the struggle to come to terms with this whole new reality of a world conditioned by pandemic; how best to serve one another; how to, literally, rebuild society; how to live in a better way. This is precisely the time for ‘inspiration’; for a creative response, that is, not only to the immediate demands of the situation but to the immediate demands of God, a voice distinctly missing from the media debate but distinctly present to those who have eyes to see and ears to hear. The call to re-visit the natural world and let it become our teacher once again is, to me, an obvious expression of this deeper call to engage with God, with a prayerful stance towards reality which allows us to be re-taught and re-tooled rather than rushing back to re-build a world much as it was before. This time of isolation has indeed given us a breathing space, a moment of prayer, the possibility of inspiration.

The Church cannot lead on this, however, unless it puts its own house in order first; unless it, too, uses this moment to re-evaluate, to seek God’s way, now; to re-learn perhaps the love that inspired the twelve apostles to delegate, not only the work of the daily distribution of food but the manner in which these disciples were to be chosen. Thomas and Philip display a certain fear of losing sight of Jesus, of being left behind without a leader to tell them to do this or that, but Jesus reassures them that they are already equipped to follow, that they know the way. After Pentecost the twelve will have learned that this way continues in a way entirely unexpected and that they can trust in the inspiration of the Spirit, not only in themselves, but in their nascent Church, in these fledgling followers allowed now to choose seven ‘deacons’. What a wonderful opportunity we have to allow the priesthood of all believers to have full reign; *this royal priesthood, this consecrated nation, this people set apart to sing the praises of God who has called us out of darkness into a time of wonderful light.*

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