

Encouragement Encouragement

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One Body in the Lord... All made for service...

THE HOST APOSTOLATE

WWW.THEHOSTAPOSTOLATE.ORG

**14, GOATBECK TERRACE,
LANGLEY MOOR,
COUNTY DURHAM DH7 8JJ**

thehostapostolate@gmail.com

This month I want to start with a story from the ‘Acts of the Apostles’.... We are now in the season of Pentecost and accepting the bountiful gifts of the Holy Spirit we are empowered and commissioned to serve God and each other in building up the Kingdom of God in preparation for Jesus’ second coming. Peter is imprisoned by Herod’s plan to have him tried and sentenced. The Lord has other plans and an Angel is sent to lead him out of the prison. Peter thinks he is dreaming until he finds himself outside and down the road. Delighted, he heads for the home of John Mark’s mother, Mary, where they were all praying for him. Rhoda, a servant girl hears the knock on the door and is so thrilled to hear Peter’s voice that she runs back to tell the others leaving Peter outside. She is told that she is mad and that it could not be him but an angel looking like him. Peter keeps on knocking not surprisingly and finally gains entry. So why this story...? First it is both amusing and very human. Poor Rhoda probably got a ticking off but her joy overcame her. Secondly because Women’s rôle, both in the Church and secular society, sexual and, gender identity is debated, there are many truths that are not being spoken and reflected upon in the light of Scripture, often making statements that do not reflect the rôle that women played and still do in the life of the Church from the very beginning.



Most people could probably itemise the names of Women in the New Testament such as Mary the Mother of Jesus, Elizabeth, St John’s mother, or Mary Magdalene, or even the woman like Joanna, Susanna or the Prophetess Anna. They may even be able to say that many women supported Jesus and followed him around often from their own resources. St. Luke instances many healings and situations involving the interaction of women with Jesus. Possibly fewer would be able to mention the women of the Old Testament such as Esther, Naomi and Ruth, Rachael, Rebecca or Sarah. But far less known are the women of the post Resurrection life of the Church with the exception of Jesus’ mother. This has led to a one sided view of the call to serve given to all the disciples and followers of Jesus, men and women.

Indeed there are many women not only mentioned in the ‘Acts of the Apostles’ and the ‘Letters’ but their roles

are made clear, even if care has to be taken to interpret them correctly. Those ‘times’ were full of different cultural ways in relation to women. For example the Greeks and Romans especially allowed women more freedom than the Jewish culture, though this too can be exaggerated. As the Christian world expanded the Apostles and disciples had to absorb and reflect the differences between the Jews and Gentile. There are many references to the women and their roles from many of the journeys of St Paul but also from the various letters.

Perhaps the most famous are the married couple Priscilla and Aquila who were personal friends of St Paul. They shared his profession of tent maker and travelled with him and Paul mentions them six times and that they had risked their lives for him and were ‘missionary’ partners. Phoebe was another woman that Paul trusted and in a special way. She was sent as an envoy to Rome but also was given letters of accreditation by him to the ‘believers’ who were urged to listen to her. There was no way that someone could be given a reference except by letter. She was a leader of the Church in Cenchreae near Corinth and referred to as a ‘deacon’. Paul gives her three titles; he calls her a ‘sister’, ‘deacon or servant’ and finally a ‘prostatist’ meaning a woman in a supportive role. Clearly a lady of note...

There was also Lydia of Philippi who was in the ‘purple dye trade’, possibly a merchant, but who challenged Paul to visit her. After she heard Paul preach she and her household were converted. She clearly was a woman of substance and she offered Paul the use of her home for meetings. At first reluctant, he agreed. Then there was ‘beloved’ Persis who was commended for her hard work for the Lord and Tryphena and Tryphosa who laboured for the Lord. He greets Julia and others (Romans 16.) To Euodia and Syntyche he issues a request not to quarrel but to continue their work of teaching in Philippi. ... ‘I beg you try to agree as sisters in the Lord. And you too my faithful partners, I want you to help these women for they have worked hard with me to spread the Gospel’.

Chloe was a prominent woman of Corinth and Paul listened to her and it was from her that he first learnt about the divisions in the Congregation.

“The world doesn’t need what women have, it needs what women are.” St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein)

It was not only Paul who listed women but also Peter. We know that he cured his 'Mother in Law' but also raised Dorcus (Tabitha) from the dead. In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (in Greek her name is Dorcas); she was always doing good and helping the poor. Later Peter raised her from the dead as the community was heartbroken at her death. Other women who had great faith he commented upon in his letter to Timothy saying that 'I am reminded of your sincere faith that lived in Lois your Grandmother and your Mother Eunice and now lives in you...

Philip too had four daughters who were known as prophetesses (unnamed) and Candace, a Queen who was brought to faith by him and Baptised. This is quite a list and there were others and many disciples.

There are so many way that the Women of post Resurrection times served the Lord. They were helpers, mothers, wives. They were missionaries, teachers and martyrs. We celebrate the feast of Ss. Peter and Paul later this month and it is interesting to see how in spite of culture and times they employed women to help them in their work, a fact mostly forgotten these days. It is also a call to serve for those who feel that women have a difficult task ahead of them and often feel ignored and unused. These women seemed to be able to stand up to those difficulties. It is also a call to realise that we are all part of one Body in Jesus who is the head of the Body and without any one of the parts the body suffers greatly. Yes, sometimes it functions but is depleted. It is the realisation that we must be prepared to respect each other's vocations and enlist the help of all who hope to serve...

It is also the beautiful feast of The Body and Blood of Christ this month. We are united in Spirit and with the presence of Jesus within us there is no room for arguments but only of service even if we differ in our opinions. We have the abiding presence of the Lord Sacramentally and Spiritually in our lives. Let us be strengthened by Him and bound together in Love.

Halina Holman

"A Church without women is like the Apostolic College without Mary. The rôle of women in the Church is not only maternity, the mother of the family, but it's stronger: it is, in fact, the icon of the Virgin, of Our Lady, the one who helps the Church grow!"

Pope Francis 2018

One Body... (a homily)



A Christian is one in whom Jesus lives. When St. Paul wrote 'I live no longer but Christ lives in me' and 'let this mind be also in you which was also in Christ. Jesus' (He)

was referring to the presence of Christ in us. . So we can always count on the support of Christ who lives in us. St. Paul experienced His support. In Jerusalem he was arrested and put into prison for proclaiming Christ. But while in prison Jesus appeared to Him and promised him His help and both in Rome and in Jerusalem. On our Christian journey there will be things that will disturb us and disappoint us, dishearten us, but we must turn to Jesus who will see us okay.

No matter how dark things can be for us, all we have to do is lift up our hearts to Jesus. He will not disappoint us. The measure of faith we have in the inner presence of Jesus is the measure of the 'light' in the darkness and 'strength' in our trials. Those who have Jesus for their protection have an inner strength that is never depressed by adversity or trials. Jesus is within us all day long, all we have to do is to turn to Him and He will not let us down. But do we really believe this?
Special Pastor

Pope Francis:

"The Eucharist gives us a grateful memory, because it makes us see that we are the Father's children, whom He loves and nourishes. It gives us a free memory, because Jesus' love and forgiveness heal the wounds of the past, soothe our remembrance of wrongs experienced and inflicted. It gives us a patient memory, because amid all our troubles we know that the Spirit of Jesus remains in us. The Eucharist encourages us: even on the roughest road, we are not alone; the Lord does not forget us and whenever we turn to Him, He restores us with his love. The Eucharist also reminds us that we are not isolated individuals, but one body."

Rome 2017



'The Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus was first officially celebrated in 1765. This solemnity is observed on the Friday after the Feast of the Body and Blood of Jesus in June. The entire month of June is also dedicated to the Sacred Heart.'

Feast days in June

1st June St Justin

3rd (Sunday) The Body and Blood of Christ

5th St Boniface 7th St Robert Newminster

8th The Sacred Heart of Jesus

10th Tenth Sunday of the Year Ordinary time.

11th St Barnabas 13th St Anthony of Padua

17th Eleventh Sunday

21st St Aloysius Gonzaga

22nd Ss. John Fisher and Thomas More

24th (Sunday) Birth of St John the Baptist

28th St Irenaeus

29th Ss. Peter and Paul. Holy Day of Oblig. (Friday)