

The Way, the Truth, and the Life (5th Sunday of Easter, Year A)

Acts 6:1-7—The Choosing of the Seven Deacons

1. The Two Factions: Hellenists (Greek speaking) vs. Hebrews (Hebrew Speaking)
2. Seven Deacons: Chosen to “serve” (Greek *diakoneō*) those in need
3. Origin of the word “Deacon” (Greek *diakonos*) (cf. 1 Tim 3:8-13; cf. CCC 1569-71)

Psalm 33—Lord, let your Mercy be Upon Us

1. Let your steadfast love be upon us, even as we hope in you...

1 Peter 2:4-9—A Chosen Race, a Royal Priesthood

1. Christ: the “living stone”; rejected by men but become the “cornerstone”
2. Priesthood of the Baptized: a “holy priesthood” offering “spiritual sacrifices...”
3. People of God: “God’s own people (Greek *laos*, from which we get “laity”)

John 14:1-12—I Am the Way, the Truth, and the Life

1. My Father’s House:
 - a. Many “rooms” or “dwellings” (Greek *monē*)
 - b. Heavenly Temple (cf. John 2:16)
2. Jesus the Bridegroom: I will come again and “take you to myself” (cf. Pitre, *Jesus the Bridegroom*, p. 117)
3. Jesus is the Savior:
 - a. The Way: the “path” (Greek *hodos*) to the Father
 - b. The Truth: the one who reveals the Father
 - c. The Life: the one who gives eternal life
4. Philip’s Request:
 - a. Just “Show us the Father” (!)
 - b. “He who has seen *me* has seen the Father” (cf. Col 1:15)
6. What Does Jesus Mean by the Disciples Doing “Greater Works” than Him?

The Catechism on Jesus as the Sole Savior of the World

Left to its own natural powers humanity does not have access to the “Father’s house,” to God’s life and happiness. *Only Christ* can open to man such access that we, his members, might have confidence that we too shall go where he, our Head and our Source, has preceded us. (CCC 661)

Thomas Aquinas on Doing “Greater Works” than Jesus

What is remarkable is that he adds, “and greater works than these will he do” (John 14:12)... Christ is speaking of this result or work when he says that believers “will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do” (John 14:12), *for the justification of the wicked is a greater work than the creation of heaven and earth*. For the

justification of the wicked, considered in itself, continues forever... But the heavens and the earth will pass away... (Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, 1900, vol. 3, p. 66; quoting Augustine, *In. Jo. Evan.* 72.3; cf. CCC 1994).

Questions for Discussion and Reflection (5th Sunday of Easter, Year A)

1. What do you think about the origin of the Deaconate in Acts 6? What light does it shed on the different duties of the apostles (whose authority is passed down to the bishops) and the deacons (represented by the 7 chosen men)?

2. What do you make of Jesus’ desire to bring us back to his Father’s house so that where he is we “may also be” (John 14:1-2)? Do you ever long to go home to the heavenly Temple of the Father’s house? Or do you let your heart be “troubled” in the face of the evils of this world?

3. How can we share the truth about Jesus being “the Way, the Truth, and the Life” in a world of so many different religions? What do we make of the biblical claim that there is “salvation in no one else” (Acts 4:12)? Read carefully over the Church’s official teaching regarding “No Salvation Outside the Church” in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* nos. 846-851 with John 14 in mind. How does this affect your own personal sense of “mission” to evangelize those who are in your life who need to hear the good news?

For Further Study

1. CCC 846-856: the Church’s official teaching on the question of “salvation outside the Church.” A must read for our contemporary multi-cultural/religious context.
2. Brant Pitre, *Jesus the Bridegroom* (New York: Image, 2014), 116-121. Discussion of Jesus’ return as Bridegroom coming back to take the Church (his Bride) to his Father’s house (Heavenly Temple).
3. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Declaration *Dominus Iesus* (On the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church), (2000),

available at http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20000806_dominus-iesus_en.html. An essential guide to the Church's official teaching on Jesus as the only Savior of humanity; written by Cardinal Ratzinger (later Pope Benedict XVI).