

Apostolic Succession

“And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost.”

For this morning I have taken from today's Gospel reading Verses 21 and 22.

“Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. **And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose so ever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose so ever sins ye retain, they are retained.**”

Jesus appears to the ten who had locked in a room with fear, composed them by uttering the freely used term of greetings those days which is “Peace be unto you”. The response to this greeting was “Unto you as well.”

He then shows his healed wounds for them to see. Why did he calm them first? The reason is simple, a calm mind is devoid of fear and receives messages from its senses accurately and has a lasting impression in one's memory. Having done that and being sure that that His disciples had indeed accepted the truth that it was He, resurrected, Jesus breaths on them and says **“Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose so ever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose so ever sins ye retain, they are retained.”**

I have heard and debated on the “Peace be unto you” section of this incident in St. John's gospel. I have also heard many who link this verse to the action of the Holy Ghost, fifty days later at Pentecost. But to my simple mind, this explanation is erroneous. At arrival of the Holy Ghost, the disciples stood up before the crowd and **“But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words:”** began the propagation of the scriptures and what St Peter spoke was heard by all those who had gathered in their very own mother tongue.

What then is the difference?

I personally believe that this is where we derive the importance of Apostolic Succession. In today's Christian life we find that anyone and everyone starts a Church of his own... 99 percent of the time make

money for his/her own wellbeing. Hence it is important for us to discern the true faith as expounded in the Scriptures.

For it is recorded in our Holy Scriptures that Jesus had said **“For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many”** St Matthew’s gospel chapter 24, verse 5. I personally would like to follow the scriptures than experiment.

What then is Apostolic Succession...

Apostolic succession, in Christianity is the teaching that bishops represent a direct, uninterrupted line of continuity from the Apostles of Jesus Christ. According to this teaching, bishops possess certain special powers handed down to them from the Apostles; these consist primarily of the right to confirm church members, to ordain priests, to consecrate other bishops, and to rule over the clergy and church members in their diocese (an area made up of several congregations).

The origins of the doctrine are obscure, and the New Testament records are variously interpreted. Those who accept apostolic succession as necessary for a valid ministry argue that it was necessary for Christ to establish a ministry to carry out his work and that he commissioned his Apostles to do this (Matthew 28:19–20). The Apostles in turn consecrated others to assist them and to carry on the work. Supporters of the doctrine also argue that evidence indicates that the doctrine was accepted in the very early church. About ad 95 Clement, bishop of Rome, in his letter to the church in Corinth (First Letter of Clement), expressed the view that bishops succeeded the Apostles.

A number of Christian churches believe that the apostolic succession and church government based on bishops are unnecessary for a valid ministry. They argue that the New Testament gives no clear direction concerning the ministry, that various types of ministers existed in the early church, that the apostolic succession cannot be established historically, and that true succession is spiritual and doctrinal rather than ritualistic.

The Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Old Catholic, Swedish Lutheran, and Anglican churches accept the doctrine of apostolic succession and believe that the only valid ministry is based on bishops whose office has descended from the Apostles. This does not mean, however, that each of these groups necessarily accepts the

ministries of the other groups as valid. Roman Catholics, for example, generally regard the ministry of the Eastern Orthodox churches as valid but do not accept the Anglican ministry. The Church of England, on the other hand, consider episcopacy necessary to the “well-being” but not to the “being” of the church; therefore, they not only accept the ministries of the other groups as valid but also have entered into close associations with Protestant groups that do not accept apostolic succession.

Our Lord has said “For many shall come in my name...” Amen.

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