October 6, 2019, Sunday
Laity Sunday
OT Isa. 61:1-11 Psalm 135:12-21
Epistle 1 Pet.2:1-10 Gospel John 17:1-8

Compassionate God, we thank you for you call your people to carry out your mission in this world. While we acknowledge the distinct ministry of the ordained, we affirm the priesthood of believers. Grant your grace and wisdom to discern your call in order to proclaim your kingdom, heal the sick and strengthen the weak, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, without end. **Amen.**



Priesthood of all Believers!

Priestertum aller Gläubigen!



Rev. Silvan Chandrakumar A, on Oct 06, 2019

Why is the priesthood so **important**? Because through the hands of the believers, the very presence of Jesus Christ is mediated to all people. Derived from the theology of Martin Luther and William Tyndale, it became prominent as a tenet of Protestant Christian doctrine, we strongly believe that through Christ we have been given direct access to God, just like a **priest**; thus **the doctrine** is called the **Royal priesthood** or **universal priesthood** or **the priesthood of all believers**. God is equally accessible to **all the** faithful, and **every Christian** has equal potential to minister for God. The Bible passage considered to be the basis of this belief is 1 Peter 2:9. Other relevant Scripture passages include Exodus 19:5–6, 1 Peter 2:4–8, Reve 1:4–6, 5:6–10, 20:6 and the Hebrews.

In the OT: Aaron and his family were separated for this purpose (Exodus 28: 1). The high priest was to be wholly identified with the people; to be one with them in affection no less than inaction; to bear their names on his shoulders, as supporting them and wrestling for them, while he also bore their names on his heart, as loving them and feeling for them. Thus he was continually to present before God a two-fold 'memorial' of His people, and to make a sort of double appeal, on the one hand, to God's power, and, on the other hand, to His mercy and loving-kindness. The family of Aaron fulfilled this mission effectively by making people associate with God, establish kings for service, and fulfill religious obligations.

In the NT: The Epistle to the **Hebrews** calls Jesus the supreme 'high **priest**,' who offered himself as a perfect sacrifice (**Heb** 7:23–28). There is an important biblical idea that has great implications for our personal spirituality and public life in the church and in the world: the idea that every believer is a priest, regardless of his or her full-time occupation. **The Privilege of Direct Access to God** in the Old Testament, only the high priest could enter the Holy of Holies. Today, we have **the privilege of direct access to God through Christ**. We can come boldly unto the throne of grace. According to Ephesians, it is because of Christ that 'we have boldness and confident access through faith in Him' (Eph. 3:12). Hebrews tells us to have the confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus: 'Let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith' (Heb. 10:19, 22).

1. (1 Pet. 2: 1-10) The 'Priesthood of All Believers' within the Context of a Broader Christian Community.

In locating the believers' priesthood within the context of the broader Christian community, the following category is utilized, namely: unified identity-As emphasized, the identity of the believers is described in Scripture as the 'people of God,' and 'royal priesthood.'

This is a unified identity that refers to the entire believing community, indicating the absence of dichotomy from within the body. The picture of the believers in Christ is not of two separate groups-the 'professional clergy' and 'ordinary laity,' but rather the whole people of God. The affirmation of the identity of the believers as priests is essential toward the modern conception of the Christian community. This is similar to the formulations of Luther and Calvin **that the church is a company of believers who are priests called by God to minister in the world.** The emphasis is on the unified identity of the broader Christian community. The importance of the individual believer largely anchored in the person's role as a microcosm of the whole and as a functioning element within the whole. With this assertion, the personal identity is derived from the group, the unified identity of the believers as priests.

2. **The Responsibility of a Prophetic Role. The priest is the LORD's anointed. But God poured out His Spirit on everyone in the last days (Joel 2:28; Acts 2:17). Those who have received the Spirit are the drivers of liberation (Is 61: 1-11).** Therefore, the priesthood of all believers is confirmed through this anointing. There must be liberation for the brokenhearted, the prisoners, the captives and the mourners. This is the proclamation of Jesus Christ (Luke 4:18). As a royal priesthood, one of our responsibilities is to 'declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light' (1 Peter 2:9). Everyone can and should bear witness to Christ in some way according to their gifts.

We need the Spirit's help in proclamation and 'convicting of the world'(Jn 16.8). However, this 'convicting of the world'

can also apply to the public prophetic proclamation in politics, business, law, and other areas where believers need the power to speak about their cause. It is a great challenge to speak publicly about sin, righteousness, or judgment, but we can ask for the Spirit's help. A wise, powerful, prophetic proclamation is a responsibility of those who are part of the 'royal priesthood.'

3. The Responsibility to be Agents of Reconciliation (Jn 17).
We must mediate Christ's love into a dark and troubled world. Just as priests are agents of reconciliation to God and others, so is the church to be such a mediator. 1 Tim 2:1 says that believers should offer prayers, supplications, and intercessions for all men, particularly for rulers. We should pray, in other words, not only for the church but for the state. The Apostle Paul was called to proclaim Christ to Gentiles, Jews, and kings. Clearly, the prayers and proclamations are to influence the highest levels of our nation. God is the one who initiates the process of reconciliation: 'All this is from God, who has reconciled himself through Christ, and has given us a ministry of reconciliation' (2 Cor. 5:18). Christ is the one who carries out the task of reconciliation. We are reconciled through Christ and in Christ. Because of what God has done in Christ, we are given a task. We now have a ministry of reconciliation. We are entrusted with the message of reconciliation, and we are ambassadors for Christ with the new message: be reconciled to God.

The CSI is a united, uniting and a mediator church, working towards an inclusive Church, with special reference to neglected people, the church celebrates the 'self-liberation' of all communities. It is such a privilege that we are composed of all clergy in the diocese as well as lay people from the congregations. We are called to celebrate the blessings of being one (Jn 17:21). However, **our principal role as peacemakers** is to facilitate (bridging the gap) the relationship between the parties (church, family, society etc) in conflict with a view to helping them reach a resolution to their issues that is timely, fair and apt. It may sometimes cost our lives too.

Let us remind ourselves the importance of our role and **the priesthood of all believers-within the Context of a Broader Christian Community, our responsibility of a Prophetic Role and responsibility to be agents of reconciliation etc.** We are called not only to show solidarity but also moving beyond in accommodating everyone. It is in partnership and full communion we will be able to fulfill the mission and ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ.