

**St Mary Magdalene's Anglican Church  
Moore Street, Adelaide**

**Reflection for the 2nd Sunday after Pentecost**

I have been a priest for fifty years so I am hardly in a position to write this reflection from a lay point of view. My memories of being a lay person in the Church stretch back to the 1960s, although that era is relevant to the question.

Pretend that an agency is hiring people to work in the priesthood. What would they look for? Who would be successful? Are the candidates for ordination suitable?

In the Gospel today Jesus is sending out his chosen few "like sheep into the midst of wolves" so they need to be "wise as serpents and innocent as doves." I recall a St Columba's Church parishioner exclaiming to me after we had been chatting for a while, "Oh! You poor darling!" That had been my first parish. Jesus went on here to describe what might happen to them when they went out. "They will hand you over ... flog you in their synagogues and you will be dragged before governors and kings." For Jesus, then, to send us all out in ministry is hardly enticing!

The world and our society have both changed immensely since the 1960s and earlier. For one, small thing, the popular music of 1960s is to today ancient history and the 1950s or earlier is primeval. On commercial radio and increasingly on the Local ABC the music of the 1980s is old. More important things have changed. Most, though not all, people who grew up in the 1960s and 1970s were determined to rebel against parents, the Church, - everything which seemed traditional and confining. It is of interest that Friday 12 June was an Anniversary of the arrival of the Beatles in Adelaide. What an immense and exuberant crowd greeted them!. It truly marked a huge turning point in our social change.

Another of many changes has been the privatisation of religion. It is extraordinary how it has simply happened over a couple of decades. Whereas the Christian religion had a certain authority in Australia it is now just another voice among many. As teenagers debunked Christianity in the 1960s and called into question its sense of right and wrong the point made was that all these subjects are matters of opinion and everyone is entitled to their own view.

Two things need to be said. One is that many changes through the years have been wonderfully good. Another is that the Church has shot itself in the foot very often over abusive behaviour and other controversies. We have not helped.

Who can be sent helpfully by Jesus into the world? It is really important not to underestimate your own merits and we have to remember that Jesus knows what he is doing and will be with us all the way. If in a heated family discussion we can just think of a pertinent question to throw in to help guide the drift of the talk. If we can behave well under all circumstances this can help others, too. To be generous, attentive, selfless and faithful to your convictions is helpful to others, as well.

Social change tends to run in cycles and is subject to human fads as well as wisdom. The present season will not persist indefinitely. Further great change will occur.

Jesus brings change and justice out of very small things we can do. It can never be right just to give up.

Graeme Kaines  
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