



WORKTALK WEEKLY

18 NOVEMBER 2008

## Words That Need Redefining

Welcome to the New Series of WORKTALKweekly

Over the next few weeks we will have a look at a few of the common words we use to describe ourselves and see them in a different light.

### # 4 Priesthood

Have you noticed how we enjoy forming clubs? They provide a way of gathering around some cause, interest, hobby or sport and create a sense of identity for the members. We seem to derive peculiar pleasure from creating exclusive clubs open only to the wealthy, powerful, skilful, intellectual or talented. From the outside, some individuals crave coming in, but once inside want to keep the group as selective as possible.

Have you also noticed that we don't even need a badge, rulebook or membership roll to form a club - human nature is such that we can figure our group behaviour along subtle lines of social acceptability, cultural expressions, or professional qualifications so that it becomes crystal clear who is in and who is out. Such clubs may be called cliques or circles or gangs but the point remains - to include or to exclude.

Occasionally someone comes along who won't play by the rules, join in the game or conform. Such characters turn conventions on their heads, shatter the status quo and disturb the best-laid lines of division. Such was the Carpenter from Nazareth who invited all kinds of misfits to pray directly to the Father in Heaven rather than enlist a human intermediary. He appointed fishermen to propagate the message of God to people and encouraged confession of wrongdoing, not to a specialist absolver, but to God direct. In short He redefined the whole notion of priesthood. Prior to His arrival priests were specialist go-betweens bringing God to people and people to God. They handled the sacrifices, the organizational detail of religious behaviour, the quality control of the managed events and the organization of the spiritual calendar.

But Jesus of Nazareth became the ultimate sacrifice, perfect go-between, final standard of best practice and central figure of all organized events.

The result is not that the priesthood has disappeared, it has expanded. Everyone who follows the way of the carpenter, turned high priest, finds, to their surprise, that they have, by default, joined the priesthood. In this system you don't outsource the work to the specialist; we're all on the team and in the club. Every Christian every day in every position is part of a priesthood called to act as go-betweens bringing God to people and people to God. Every one of us is invited to put energy into quality control of events such as tiny conversations or massive gatherings designed to connect with the Father. Every day is part of the spiritual calendar and each task is organized worship.

You are a priest and your parish is around you. You are an employee of the High priest and represent Him in the market. You don't need to wear any particular clothing to mark you out. This is not an exclusive club but a default responsibility entrusted to all Christians.

This is not to say that some individuals will not become full-time employees in the business of the church in order to further organized and targeted activity but this does not make them any more a member of the priesthood than you or I if we are followers of Jesus of Nazareth.

Peter, who has been identified with the priesthood more than any other human figure, wrote to the church scattered then as he does now describing us all as "a royal priesthood".

So this week pray that you can discharge your priestly function to your parishioners where you work, crying out to God on their behalf when they are in trouble or stressed and speaking out for God to them in their real life experiences. This is the job of the priesthood. This is your job - we are all bi-vocational now.

© Geoff Shattock November 2008

## **BIBLE SECTION**

### **1 Peter 2: 9-10**

9But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.  
10Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

All WORKTALKweekly archives are for personal use only. For permission to use for any other purposes please email using the address below thank you.

**WORKTALK, 56 Baldry Gardens, London SW16 3DJ**  
**T:+44 (0)20 8764 8080**  
<http://www.worktalk.gs>  
[comms@worktalk.gs](mailto:comms@worktalk.gs)