

Realism, Budget, Staffing And The Truth About Apostolic Succession A Planting

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Apostolic Succession is not a palpation. It is a way of living. St. Jerome said, "A vestment does not make a bishop." A laying on of hands does not make an ordination.

Recently, our parish church witnessed this truth in action. An individual was engaged who, as all competent authority was warned ante facto, was neither regenerate, baptized nor called to the priesthood. Their tenure as "priest" at our parish church bore the fruit of their condition: febrility, tyranny and, finally, schism.

Sacraments are reactive not proactive activities. They recognize that a condition exists. They do not cause the existence of a condition. Sacraments are outward and visible signs (recognitions) of inward and invisible (preexisting) conditions of grace. Imputations of proactivity to sacraments are an effort to establish magic as truth, *hocus-pocus* as reality.

Clergy measure the success of their professional status by the size of their parish church's annual budget and by that budget's annual rate of growth. 10% annual growth in annual parish church budget is the productivity goal set for clergy by their employers, denominational management who call themselves "church executives." A large parish church budget that is growing at 10% or more annually is the track record of a successful parish church clergy and the standard against which professional status is assessed during performance reviews.

Of course, this standard is both niggardly and absurd. Niggardly because a church in flood -- having strength to discern and put in practice the Wishes of the Holy Spirit -- has financial throughput so vast as to be incalculable. ¹ Absurd because while Scripture, Tradition and Reason relate several measures of professional success for believers -- the gist being, as everyone knows, single-pointed love of God and melting love of neighbor -- 10% annual growth in annual budget is not among them. ²

¹ Crown Jewels of the world's most royal family suffuse the North Transept of *Notre Dame de Chartres* from their sublime matrix in the *Rose of France*, above.

² This 10% business -- and it is both a government and a business -- derives from the sacerdotal levy at the Jerusalem Temple after the days of Solomon. We call it the tithe. It can be money or goods. The levy is part of an implementation of the doctrine of substitutional suffering or surrogate atonement. This doctrine is unanimously condemned by the Holy Spirit speaking through the prophets, and the institutional occasion of its implementation was finally and forever removed by the same Person acting as the Army of Titus which, in 70 A.D., took down Jerusalem and salted it. Jeremiah 7:22 puts the lie to the entire Pentateuchal sacerdotal system, which centers in this ineffective and improper doctrine of substitutional suffering (surrogate atonement).

The doctrine of substitutional suffering is a teething ring for the guilt-ridden, ameliorating pain but not removing its cause. Only contrition (Psalm 51, *sans* vs. 18-19, which are sacerdotal emendation) removes guilt. Contrition, also, is sufficient penance.

The popularity of the doctrine of substitutional suffering is nothing daunted by experience, facts or the Will of the Almighty: the sacerdotal authors of the Book of Hebrews, Anselm of Canterbury, the Book of Common Prayer and an interminable line of Manichean/Docetic (Fundamentalist, Revivalist and Neo-Orthodox) preachers propound it with impressive mixtures of vigor and sophistication. The people want it and they get it, just as an infant is grateful for a teething ring. Nonetheless, the doctrine of substitutional suffering or surrogate atonement is soteriological *hocus-pocus*. Life does not work by substitution. Everyone sustains the consequences of their own deeds and of their own condition of grace, good or bad, one way or another.

Clergy in Apostolic Succession live as the Apostles did: they support themselves at manual labor. ³

Our parish church should continue existing staff in existing conditions. But all new staff engaged at our parish church should be Apostolic clergy, living without being a burden on the congregation. Twelve or eighteen such clergy could operate the work load now extant. As the work load changed, obviously, the number of Apostolic clergy engaged at our parish church should vary appropriately.

This regime will require adjustments of attitude, enhancements of spirituality, all the way back to the divinity and church music schools, where all problems of the ecclesial organization originate. Shrieks of defiance and ridicule will be heard.

These must be met with the further insistence that all divinity and church music school students, staff and faculty, all parochial and standing clergy and all paid lay staff of judicatories and parish churches submit to zero-tolerance random drug and alcohol testing, as employed for military personnel and holders of the Commercial Drivers License. In addition, mechanisms must be generated and set in operation with the greatest urgency to identify and dismiss pederasts and their catamites from positions of responsibility in church schools and hierarchies.

There is no diocese or parish church in ECUSA which can sustain 10% annual growth in annual budget. But when the denomination's credibility is compromised by a public perception -- and an accurate one -- that its hierarchy is a lair for cheats, idlers, addicts and perverts, even necessary and appropriate expansion due to vigor of spiritual living cannot occur. The house has to be cleaned up and that means the clergy have to be Apostolic

in manner of living. The leadership is the problem, the self-described “church executives.”

The church in all parts must insist on clean, healthy, Apostolic leadership that earns its living at manual labor.

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