

Church Leadership

Letter to Titus from Nicopolis (3:12) to Crete 65AD

(To young, mainly Jewish, communities)

‘Appoint presbyters in every town as I directed you’ (Titus 1:5)

Paul goes on to describe the kind of person Titus is to look for in appointing presbyters. Since they exercise a supervisory role he speaks of them as ‘bishops’

(‘overseers’, 1:7)

First Letter to Timothy from Macedonia to Ephesus 65AD

(To older, mainly Gentile, communities in 'Asia')

3:2-7 describes the qualities needed by a 'bishop'

3:8-13 describes the qualities needed by a 'deacon'

5:17 'Let the presbyters who rule well be considered worthy of double honour, especially those who labour in preaching and teaching.'

Church Leadership in the New Testament

Those in organisational leadership in the Church

- Leadership occurs in every aspect. The most important leaders are those who lead in love
- Every organisation needs organisational leaders. In the Church we speak of the sacrament of Holy Orders ('Hierarchy').
- Church organisational leadership in NT
- 48AD Southern Galatia. 'Paul and Barnabas appointed elders [**presbyteroi**] in each church'(Acts 14:23).
- They followed the synagogue custom. Similarly for young churches in Crete 65AD: 'Titus, I left you behind in Crete for this reason, so that you would appoint elders [**presbyteroi**] in every town as I directed you'(Titus 1:5).

49AD Thessalonica

‘We appeal to you, brothers and sisters, to respect those who labour among you, and who have charge over you (**proïstamenoï** = those standing in front) in the Lord and admonish you. Esteem them very highly in love because of their work’(1Thessalonians 5:12-13).

Paul uses the same word in 57AD to speak of the leaders of the Christians in Rome. He exhorts them to carry out their ministry ‘efficiently and conscientiously’(Romans 12:8).

In neither letter does he describe their role in detail. Firstly, there was no need, for the Thessalonians and Romans knew how leadership was being exercised among them. Secondly, we don’t have to assume that the same people exercised leadership in every aspect of the community’s life. In any case, both letters are written not to the leaders but to the community.

Writing from Ephesus back to Corinth where he had lived from 50 to 51AD, Paul states: ‘God has appointed in the Church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers’(1Corinthians 12:28).

Paul himself was an ‘apostle’(one sent to them from the Risen Christ). There were members of the community that had a special gift of speaking from their experience of Jesus’ Spirit (‘prophets’), and others taught the essentials of what it means to follow Jesus (‘teachers’).

He goes on the list a number of other ministries, including ‘governing’(Greek: *kubernêsis*).

These had special organisational skills and were graced to keep the community working together in harmony – though this does not seem to have been working too well in Corinth!

57AD Ephesus

Addressing the **elders [presbyteroi]**, Paul says: ‘Keep watch over yourselves and over the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you **overseers [episkopoi - ‘bishops’]** to **shepherd [poimainô - ‘pastor’]** the church of God’(Acts 20:28).

59AD - Letter to Gentile Churches in the East (‘Ephesians’)

After mentioning ‘apostles, prophets, evangelists’, Paul speaks of ‘**pastors (poimenoï)** and teachers’(Ephesians 4:11).

Each of these ministries makes its special contribution ‘to equip the saints [members of the community] for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ’(Ephesians 4:12).

Philippians 1:1

62AD

Paul and Timothy,
slaves of Christ Jesus,
to all the saints
in Christ Jesus
who are in Philippi,
with the **overseers**
[episkopoi] and
deacons [diakonoi].'



- The title and functions of those responsible for organisational leadership in the early church would presumably have varied according to the composition, size and situation of each community. The larger the community, and the longer Paul (or whoever founded the community) was absent, the more there would have been a need to devise appropriate local leadership to organise the community's life, to relate to other communities and to the society at large.

Catechism

n. 876 'Intrinsically linked to the sacramental nature of church ministry is its character of service.'

n. 879 'Sacramental ministry in the Church is at once a collegial and a personal service.'

n. 881 Peter was given by Jesus a special role among the Twelve

Peter was martyred in Rome, as was Paul. The heroic faith of the Church of Rome which suffered the first State instituted persecution under Nero, along with the central importance of the city of Rome in the Empire, meant that other churches looked to Rome for a certain leadership, and to its bishop as continuing the symbolic unifying focus for the Church.

Rivalry between Rome and Constantinople (the actual centre for the Emperor from Constantine on) led to a division in the Church between West and East, which hardened in the 11th century.

The emergence of nationalism in the West led to a further division in the 16th century.

n. 882 ‘The Pope, Bishop of Rome and Peter’s successor, “is the perpetual and visible source and foundation of the unity both of the bishops and of the whole company of the faithful”(Vatican II, LG 23).

‘That the episcopacy itself might be one and undivided, and that the entire multitude of the faithful through priests closely connected with one another might be preserved in the unity of faith and communion, placing the Blessed Peter over the other apostles, Christ established in him the perpetual principle and visible foundation of both unities, upon whose strength the eternal temple might be erected, and the sublimity of the Church to be raised to heaven might rise in the firmness of the faith’(Vatican I D. 1821).

n. 882 ‘The Roman Pontiff, by reason of his office as Vicar of Christ, and as pastor of the entire Church has full supreme, and universal power over the whole Church, a power which he can always exercise unhindered’

(Vatican II, LG 22; see Vatican I D.3064)

n. 886 ‘The individual bishops are the visible source and foundation of unity in their own particular Churches’(Vatican II, LG 23).

n. 895 ‘The bishops should not be thought of as vicars of the Pope.’

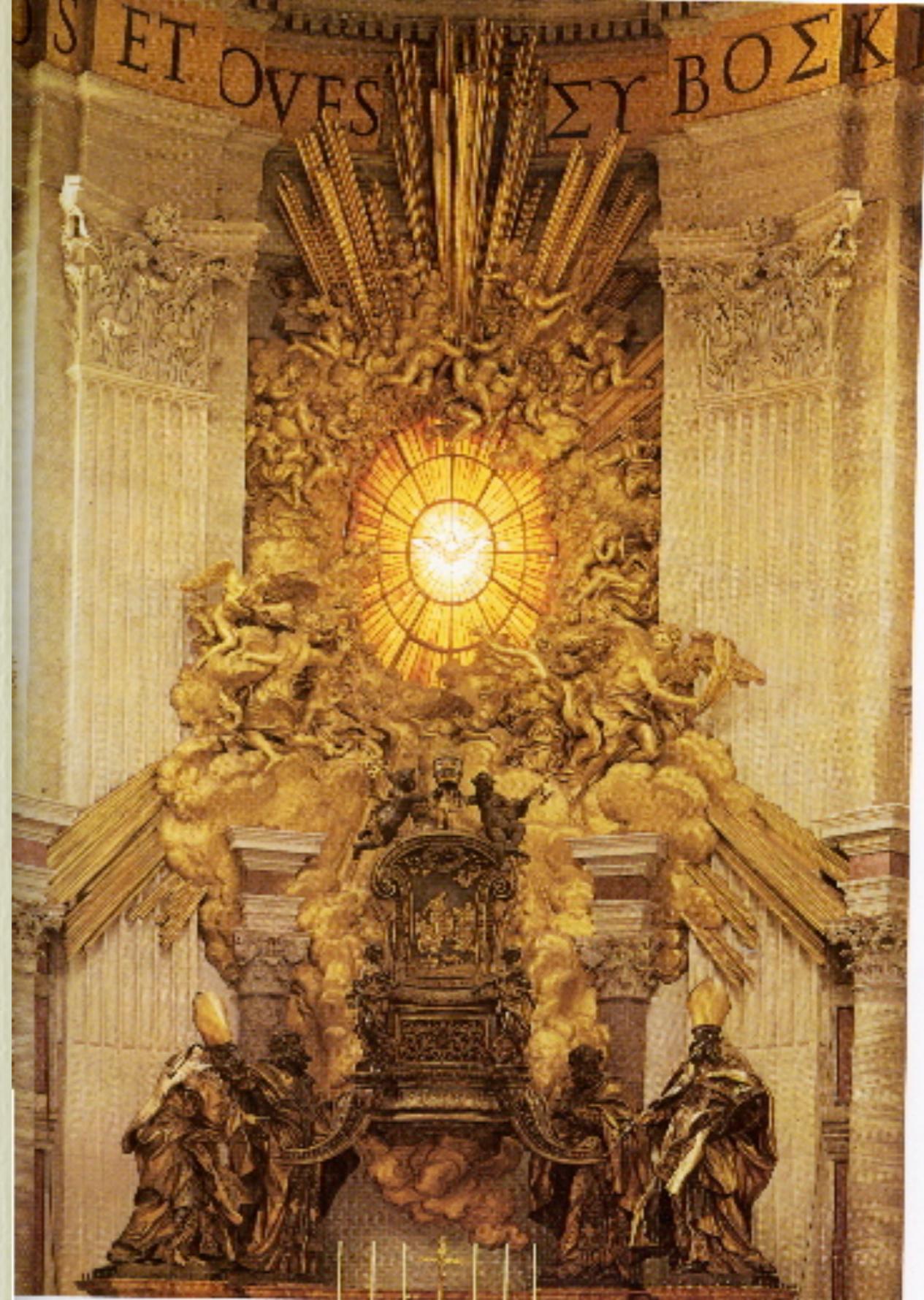
- n. 893 • Priest - Ministry of sanctifying exercised by those in Holy Orders
- Prophet - Ministry of teaching exercised by those in Holy Orders
- n. 894-896 • King - Ministry of governing exercised by those in Holy Orders

n. 888-892 • Office of Teaching
(‘Magisterium’)

n. 890

‘The pastoral duty of the
Magisterium is aimed at seeing to it
that the People of God abides in
the truth that liberates.’

**Wooden chair from 9th
century said to have
been used by St Peter.**



Athanasius

John Chrysostom

Ambrose

Augustine

Clement speaks of Paul's martyrdom in a letter written from Rome at the end of the first century (1Clement 1.5):

‘Owing to envy, Paul also obtained the reward of patient endurance, after being seven times thrown into captivity, compelled to flee, and stoned. After preaching both in the east and west, he gained the illustrious reputation due to his faith, having taught righteousness to the whole world, and come to the extreme limit of the west, and suffered martyrdom under the prefects. Thus was he removed from the world, and went into the holy place, having proved himself a striking example of patience.’

The ‘extreme limit of the west’ has been interpreted as a reference to Spain. It is possible that Paul did fulfil his dream and that he headed to Spain upon his release from custody in Rome. This would have meant going into an area where Greek was not the common language. If he did in fact go to Spain, problems of communication may have been enough to convince him to cut this mission short and return to his earlier mission fields in the east.

Ignatius of Antioch in the opening years of the second century also speaks of Paul's martyrdom (To the Ephesians, 12), as does Tertullian in his Prescriptions against Heresy (36.3). In his *History of the Church*, composed in the early years of the fourth century, Eusebius writes of Paul's release from prison and of his martyrdom:

‘After defending himself, the Apostle was again sent on the ministry of preaching, and coming a second time to the same city [Rome] suffered martyrdom under Nero. During this imprisonment he wrote the Second Epistle to Timothy, indicating at the same time that his first defence had taken place and that his martyrdom was at hand.’(2:22)

‘It is recorded that Paul was beheaded in Rome itself, and that Peter likewise was crucified under Nero. This account of Peter and Paul is substantiated by the fact that their names are preserved in the cemeteries of that place even to the present day.

It is confirmed likewise by Caius, a member of the Church, who arose under Zephyrinus, bishop of Rome. He, in a published disputation with Proclus, the leader of the Phrygian heresy, speaks as follows concerning the places where the sacred corpses of the aforesaid apostles are laid: 'But I can show the trophies of the apostles. For if you will go to the Vatican or to the Ostian way, you will find the trophies of those who laid the foundations of this church.' And that they both suffered martyrdom at the same time is stated by Dionysius, bishop of Corinth, in his epistle to the Romans, in the following words: 'You have thus by such an admonition bound together the planting of Peter and of Paul at Rome and Corinth. For both of them planted and likewise taught us in our Corinth. And they taught together in like manner in Italy, and suffered martyrdom at the same time.'

– History of the Church, 2.22; 2.25.5



You are Mine (video)

words and music David Haas
©1991, GIA Publications.
Reprinted with permission
under One License A-642681.
All rights reserved.

