

# ST PETER'S WEEKLY NEWS

## 18 JULY 2021



### **Growing healthy Christians**

#### **Fifth mark: operates as a community**

Over the past few weeks we have been using Robert Warren's, 'The Healthy Churches Handbook' and the seven marks of a healthy church he explores in it to think about our own faith and how we might gauge our own spiritual health. This week we reflect on the fifth mark, 'Operates as a community.'

In Fr Robert's description this is about a church being open and welcoming rather than operating as a clique or club. This can be applied to us as Christian individuals too. In Fr Roberts description this concerns relationships, leadership and ministry.

In our Christian faith relationships are very important. Each Sunday we declare that we are the body of Christ. This description comes from the writings of St Paul who on more than one occasion described the Church as a body with different parts that were all interrelated and co-dependent. That means we are all interconnected and need each other in our life of faith. I have often been told, "Well, vicar, I don't need to go to church. I have my way with God and that's all that matters." True, we can and do have a personal relationship with God. But God calls all of us to be part of the church because God understands we each have different gifts that help to build each other up. A person may have a personal relationship with God but if that is all they have how are they going to grow. We grow through conversation, through learning from each other and praying for each other. We cannot do all this in isolation.

This is where Fr Roberts leadership criteria fits in. He is referring to the ordained and lay leadership working together. In the understanding of the priesthood of all believers we all work together for the betterment of the church and the proclamation of the good news, because we all must take part else the message is less than it could be. By sharing together and being part of the whole, we build up the body of Christ in our community.

The third area mentioned is lay ministry. Here is to realise that such working together and sharing is not for someone else in the church; it is for you. You have a part to play in the mission and ministry of the Christian community. God cannot afford passengers in the boat of faith; we all must pull on the oars and play our part in the proclamation of the good news so that the story of salvation can be heard by as many as possible.

Love and prayers,

Fr D