

ST PETER'S WEEKLY NEWS

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Growing healthy Christians First Mark: Being energised by faith

In last week's letter we began to think about growing healthy Christians, based on a book by Robert Warren entitled 'The Healthy Churches Handbook'. In this book Fr Robert identifies seven marks of a healthy church and we are going to see if these can help us in our journey of faith. The first of these is "Being energised by faith".

This mark is considered first because here starts our journey. If we are not energised by our faith we are rather like a stalled car, not going anywhere fast. Are you then energised by your faith? Four points of reference are picked up by Fr Robert: worship and sacramental life; motivation; engagement with scripture and nurturing faith in Christ.

Worship and sacramental life: There is a subtle but profound difference between going to church and sharing in worship. The first is about duty the other is desiring to encounter God. How do you experience God? Is your engagement with worship positive and fulfilling? Is it a chore or a duty? Worship won't always be dazzling wonderful. It is often affected by our moods and where we are in our lives. But if we are open to God in worship, if we have prepared with prayer and personal reflection, if our attitude is one of reception and openness then our experience can be positive and fulfilling.

Motivation. Our energy in our journey of faith comes from a positive desire to serve God, to serve one another. If our motivation is not there the overall experience of faith is lack lustre and impoverished. Being creative and engaged in faith, wanting to know God and seeking ways to encounter God can be great stimulants to our motivation in faith.

Engagement with scripture. Our scriptures contain the story of salvation, of our salvation. It is here we find faith coming alive as we engage with God's actions in the world. Scripture can be a barrier if we are apprehensive or unsure of it. Scripture should be our friend. We don't have to be great quoters or have it 'chapter and verse'. It should be something we encounter daily and with which we are comfortable.

Nurturing in the faith. Like all living things we need feeding. The food of the spiritual life is prayer and reflection, space to think about and sharing in our beliefs. Gathering for worship is part of that. Sharing in study groups or reading Christian books also is part of this journey. Faith does need to be fed, through feeding it is encouraged and grows.

How does your spiritual journey stand up to the first mark of a healthy Christian? Just reflecting on that first question is an important stage on the journey.

Love and prayers,

Fr D