

ST PETER'S WEEKLY NEWS

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Growing healthy Christians

Sixth mark: makes room for all

The Early Church had plenty of discussions about who should be allowed in the church, who salvation was for, who could be saved; look at the First Council at Jerusalem (Acts 15). Thinking the salvation of God was for God's chosen people, how on earth could gentiles be saved? Then, if Gentiles were to be saved should not they fulfil the laws of Moses and be circumcised? As the church developed and grew so it began to understand that the salvation of God was no longer for a select group but for the whole of creation, that it was not written in flesh but in the Spirit, for all belong to God and any that would hear the word of God could turn to God.

There is a danger, as we settle in our faith journey, that we can become complacent. This is partly a natural reaction; but then the way of Jesus challenges what we might call 'the norm'. The Christian message calls us to be open and welcoming, to include new thoughts, members, ways of worship, understanding of our faith. As we have said previously part of the challenge of a living faith is to grow and in growing to embrace change. Newcomers and new experiences will challenge us and help us to grow in faith and love, if only by encouraging us to ask questions. This challenge, in the context of Fr Robert Warren's writing in 'The Healthy Churches Handbook.' is being prepared to accept newcomers, make space for children and young people, to encourage enquirers and to include diversities.

In the context of our personal faith and our journey with Jesus it is about not immediately saying 'no' but looking for the 'yes' in a situation. This is hard. Naturally we like to be comfortable, we know what we like and being challenged quite frankly is hard work. Our tradition, our translation of bible, our history, how we have understood God, how we pray, we have already worked at these why do we have to do more? Good question. The first question to that question is, is your faith still living and breathing or are you taking it for granted? We all take our faith for granted to varying degrees and from time to time. As we come out of lockdown are we not just feeling exhausted and need the comfort of familiarity? One thing the apostles and Jesus taught us was that faith costs and the faith journey never rests. It costs in time and effort. Some of that effort is keeping ourselves open to others, making room and receiving others and what they bring with joy.

Love and prayers,

Fr D