

## **Father Philip's Address to St Paul's Assembly**

**Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> October, 2013**

**Pastoral Care Week**

### **AN IMAGE OF THE CHURCH**

**Acts 2:42-47**

Whoever we are, wherever we are, we are all part of a 'group' of one sort or another.

We have no choice about some of the groups of which we are members: the country in which we are born; the family into which we are born; the form in which we are placed at school or our school house.

Then there are groups we are members of because we might be asked to be members of them as a result of particular skills that we have. At school they might be sports teams like swimming or basketball or football, the choir or orchestra.

And there are groups we join because we may have a particular interest or belief we wish to pursue such as the Scouts, the Red Cross or the Christian Union. Last week's Joint Clubs Admission Day arranged by the Student's Association had an impressive display of the many different interests that people have and what is available at a place such as St Paul's. From the English, History and Geography Societies, through to the Aviation, Transport and Careers Clubs to name some.

Whatever sort of group we belong to, and we belong to many groups all at the same time, there are things which are common to them all. Each group, be it a Nation or a chess club, will have its rules and procedures to deal with the times when the rules are broken. Each group will have people we like a lot and those we don't have much time for. Each group will have a purpose and if it doesn't fulfill its purpose the group is in danger of falling apart.

A Country which doesn't attempt to make people feel that they belong will lead to rebellion. A Table Tennis club which doesn't arrange matches or opportunities to play will lose its membership fairly quickly. An English

Society which shows German films each week will find itself with a puzzled group of people wondering if they have come to the right place.

This morning our Scripture reading came from the Book of Acts. The proper name of the book is “The Acts of the Apostles”. It tells us of the early days of the Church after the death and resurrection of Jesus and how the Apostles responded to their mission.

So it gives us a good picture of what the Church was like nearly two thousand years ago. And the passage which we heard this morning sums it up very nicely. It tells us that the early Christians:

- Listened to the teaching of the apostles
- They celebrated the Eucharist together, ‘the breaking of bread’ and prayed together
- They shared their possessions
- They assisted anyone who was in need and
- They shared meals together and worshipped together.

In other words the Early Church was a community of people who chose to come together. They worshipped together, principally in the Eucharist, and they helped those who were in need.

They fulfilled the command of Jesus which we heard on Monday in our Assembly – to love God and to love our neighbour. Worship and Outreach, Worship and Pastoral Care.

Two thousand years ago that is what the Church did, and tries to do today. It is what we try to do here at St Paul’s. To worship God, with the regular celebration of the Eucharist where we have the breaking of bread just as we heard in the reading. By praising God in word and song at Assembly and at other opportunities. And then to care for one another. To care for those within the school through the procedures we heard about on Monday – the Chaplaincy, the Guidance Team, Form Teachers, Social Workers, Educational Psychologist and in many other ways. And also to look beyond the School and to become aware of those in our wider community who are in need and respond in ways which follows the command of Jesus to love our neighbour as ourself.

In this Pastoral Care week as we give thanks for all who provide Pastoral Care, remember that Pastoral Care is not just about what we receive. It is not simply a matter of giving thanks for what has been put in place at St Paul's in order to care for us. It is also a matter of how **we all** respond and care for others in turn.

The command of Jesus to love God and to love others is not just one which was given to a select few. It was given to each and every one of us.

So this week, give thanks for the Pastoral Care which is available for you. But also take some time to look at what you are doing to care for those around you. Classmates, fellow students at St Paul's and all who work at the College, family, friends, other residents of Hong Kong who you don't know and people further away in other lands.

What are the small daily actions you can do to show care and respect for others? What are the bigger gestures and activities you can become involved with to reach out and show the compassion and the love of God.

When the Church or a Christian Community does not have worship, the Eucharist and outreach as central to its work and life, then it is not following the example we heard in our reading, and is not being true to the community it is called to be.

We sang this morning the words:

Help us to help each other, Lord,  
each other's cross to bear;  
let each his friendly aid afford,  
and feel his brother's care.<sup>1</sup> \*

May what we sang this morning be what we do each day.

Thank you.

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Wesley 1707-1788 (Hymns Ancient and Modern NS 374, Common Praise 461)  
The last line of the Common Praise version reads: and feel another's care.