

Message from Bishop Robert

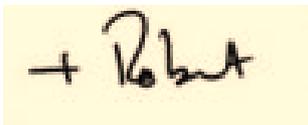
3 May 2022

One of the enormous privileges of the ministry in which Bishop Rachel and I share in this Diocese, is to preside over services of Confirmation. These are always enormously moving, as candidates, young and old, with many and diverse backgrounds, come and affirm their desire to follow Christ. Often candidates will share something of what has brought them to this moment, sometimes speaking of how their faith has brought them courage and hope in challenging circumstances and of the significance and importance of their church family. Perhaps we don't say it but coming to church does matter, we are fed and nourished in worship by the scriptures and receiving Holy Communion and are shaped into community as we encourage and support each other and root ourselves in God. Asked if you can be a Christian without going to church, I usually respond with a cautious, 'Yes... but it's very hard and why would you?' If we are part of a family surely, it's really important to spend time together.

Yet of course it is not just about going to church, it's also very much enabled by what we do when we meet together, about being Church, being Christ's presence in the world. Indeed, the confirmation service which begins with that declaration that we have decided to follow Jesus Christ ends with the candidates being sent out to be 'light in the world' – usually carrying candles as we process out beyond the church door into the community. This is a reminder that we are called to live our faith Sunday through Saturday, wherever we are and whatever we may be doing. All of us, because of our baptism, are called to share in the ministry of the Church to tell the story of God's love by what we say and all that we do.

We often talk of clergy, Readers, some lay ministries in the Church, having a 'vocation'. Next month we will be ordaining people to the particular ministries of deacons and priests, but this call is always set in the context of the vocation, the calling of the whole Church, in which we all share. For some that will be living out our faith in employment in all its variety, for others, it might be in activities in retirement or in education, for others still, it might be set in our family or community life. Living this might be in delight or sometimes in adversity – not every job we do will be fulfilling, not all aspects of family life, or education or retirement will bring us personal enjoyment or satisfaction. Most of what we do will be a mixture but as confirmation reminds us it is in all these places, we are to be Christ's presence, knowing that God is present with us, that we are called by name and known.

In the coming weeks you will, I am sure, see plenty of pictures of ordination services. We have ours in this Diocese in June. They will be a cause for much rejoicing and delight – do please pray for this year's candidates, but I pray that you also remember that wider call in which we all share to be Christ's light in our daily lives and all of the places in which we find ourselves day by day.



+ Robert

