

This Month's Liturgy; February 2019

One of the notable 'weekday' Feasts kept by the Liturgy in the month of February is that of **The Chair of Saint Peter** on 22nd of the month. While celebrated with particular pomp here in Rome, it is a feast which effects all of us who are **in communion with** Francis our Pope because the day recalls the teaching and pastoral role which the Bishop of Rome, the Pope, has inherited through the centuries from Peter – 'you must strengthen your brethren' (Luke 22;32). The **cathedra** or **chair** of Peter stands for that position of teaching and unifying which the Bishop of Rome has – it is not just a call to continuity with years past but a challenge and appeal in the present for a unity which can be so threatened in our fragmented world and society but which is the unity of all God's children within the one flock under one shepherd, Christ Jesus himself. Not only in our civic society but also sadly even within our own communities of faith, there can be sown a dis-unity which strikes at the very heart of the witness which the disciples of Christ are called to present to the world – to be strong and steadfast in Christ.

So that our unity, our one-ness, is not merely a nice ideal but something 'real and active' we need to actively maintain our unity of faith and of action; sometimes the phrase is used 'sentire cum ecclesia' to **feel** with the church, to have the love of the Church's mission and ministry so deeply planted within us that all we say and do seeks naturally, almost as our second nature, to maintain and promote unity – be it within a family, a parish, a Diocese or indeed the worldwide Church.

In the Mass there is a profound prayer for unity which sometimes can be a little overlooked or under-appreciated and it links the gift of peace with the gift of unity

Lord Jesus Christ, you said to your apostles: I leave you peace, my peace I give you. Look not on our sins, but on the faith of your Church, and grant us the peace and unity of your kingdom where you live for ever and ever.

May we be ministers of that peace and unity wherever we find ourselves.....

Canon Philip