

Evensong - 28.06.20

Homily, St Peter and St Paul

Sermon by Gemma Dashwood

Tonight we celebrate the festival of Sts Peter and Paul – both of whom played critical roles in the earliest days of the founding of the Christian church. As many of you would have read in Fr Steve's reflection, Peter and Paul were in fact very different people, with contrasting backgrounds, and at times, opposing points of view. But they also had another thing in common – they didn't always get it right!

Peter (or Simon Peter) was the first to state the true identification of Jesus when he said "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God" and when Jesus replies "You are Peter, and on this rock I shall build my church" he effectively states that the recognition of his true identity is enough of which the church can be founded.

However, it didn't take Peter long to go wrong. Shortly after Peter rebukes Jesus, and Jesus replies to him "Get behind me Satan!". Things didn't get much better either – Peter was one of the three taken up the mountain for the Transfiguration but yet he clearly had no idea what was going on, he misunderstood the meaning behind the washing of the feet, and he fell asleep while Jesus was praying.

Then, when Jesus was being taken to be crucified, Peter only went as far as the courtyard of the high priest and watched from there. And in his act of ultimate betrayal, Peter denies Jesus three times. However, despite all Peter's misunderstandings, the resurrected Jesus appears to Peter, ensures that Peter loves him, and then gives him the commission to feed his sheep – after which Peter takes on the challenge and leads the newly born Christian Church.

Paul gives another example of getting things very very wrong. Before his conversion, while he was still Saul, he persecuted these new Christians. He put people in prison and he breathed threats and murder against the believers of Jesus. Could there be a less likely person to be converted into one of the most influential leaders of the Christian church?

But yet he was. He encountered Jesus and accepted the invitation.

However even the conversion didn't mean that he was suddenly perfect. Paul ignored warnings from his friends (warnings which were sent from the Holy Spirit, even) and went to Jerusalem in Acts 21, suffering terrible acts of torture. Paul's mistake here is not understanding that as Christians we don't HAVE to suffer all the time. That is not our purpose.

Paul's identity as a Jew and a Pharisee undoubtedly made him biased in certain circumstances, and that is totally understandable. He is human. Just like us. And he makes mistakes. Just like us.



ST PAUL'S  
ANGLICAN PARISH IPSWICH

**Anglican**  
Church  
St Paul's Ipswich

As Simon became Peter and Saul became Paul these two people came to know Jesus in ways which completely changed their lives. But the point is, that neither Peter nor Paul always got it right – and as we've seen they sometimes got it very very wrong. However they kept trying. And Jesus put his faith in them, flawed as they were, to carry out his will.

I find this comforting. Because I make mistakes. All the time. And to realise that Jesus can still trust me and will not stop loving me nor will ever leave me despite my errors means that I can have the strength to carry on and keep trying.

So just like Peter and Paul we can all learn from our mistakes and take courage to go forth, into whatever sort of world it is in which we now live.

St Paul's Anglican Parish  
124 Brisbane Street  
Ipswich Qld 4305

Phone: 07 3812 0377  
Fax: 07 3281 6098  
Email: [admin@stpaulsips.org.au](mailto:admin@stpaulsips.org.au)

Postal address:  
PO Box 168  
Ipswich Qld 4305