

Homily (notes) from Canon Philip Dyson 29th June 2022 - St Peter & St Paul

We are the Church of St Peter and St Paul: Peter the rock, Paul the builder. Both their lives testify to the power of God to change and transform. Yet both Peter and Paul were deeply flawed, deeply human, and both experienced the grace of conversion. They both bear eloquent witness to the power of the gospel to transform us.

Peter, impetuous, impulsive, unstable, emotional, and cowardly. Peter betrayed. On one occasion Jesus even saw the work of Satan in what Peter was saying to him, rebuking him severely with the words, that I think we too often need to use: "Get behind me, Satan... you do not have the concerns of God, but merely human concerns." Yet Peter truly became the rock upon which the church was built – the rock of martyrdom and devotion to Christ.

Paul, was zealous, blinded, proud and violent, and Paul persecuted. Paul had blood on his hands, being complicit in the murder of many of the first believers, esp. Stephen. Paul freely admitted... "Once I used to be a blasphemer, and did all I could to injure and discredit the faith.

What changed them? What transformed them so they became the rocks upon which the church was built? The key was revelation.

Peter received it at Caesarea Philippi; enabling him to proclaim that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God. He attributes his grasp and understanding to the gift of revelation he had received, which Jesus affirms in the gospel.

The expression 'flesh and blood' is a reference to man and the common way of understanding things.

In the case of Jesus, this common way is not enough. A grace of revelation is needed, which comes from the Father.

Paul, following his conversion on the road to Damascus became the greatest evangelist of the early church. By any standard or stretch of the imagination they are both towering figures of church and human history.

We stand on their shoulders; they are our brothers in faith and rightly we celebrate their life, commemorate their witness and ask their prayers and intercession for us and our church today.

All brought home last week in Cardiff at Archbishop Mark's installation, which was a great privilege to be at. The Papal Nuncio with the great scroll of appointment from Peter today, Francis, and sealed by him at the Lateran in Rome.

The Nuncio also spoke of being with Archbishop Mark today in Rome when new Archbishops receive the Pallium, made from the wool of lambs blessed on St Agnes Day, Agnus Dei, which lie on the tomb of Peter overnight.

Great reminder this is our one, holy, catholic & apostolic faith; the faith that takes weakness into account: the faith that acts through grace, using as means, our human nature.

It is this loving embrace that makes the church indestructible and why the gates of hell have and will not prevail against her.

St Peter, pray for us : St Paul, pray for us.