

## Reflection for Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2020

On Monday of this week it was the feast of St Peter and St Paul, although the feast was actually celebrated last Sunday, which incidentally was the fifth anniversary of my ordination to the Diaconate.

What great examples of bearing witness to the Gospel and faith in the risen Christ they are for us and especially for me as I began my diaconate ministry five years ago. They remind us of the great responsibility we have to carry out Jesus' command to go to the ends of the earth and preach the Good News to every creature.

Peter, as we know from the Gospels was very impetuous, 'Lord when are you going to restore Israel.....' he thought Jesus was going to be like a military leader and drive out the Romans from Israel.

He was also looking forward to having a very high seat in heaven when he asked Jesus, '...which of us will sit on your right side in the Kingdom of heaven...?'

He was quite annoyed when Jesus asked him 3 times if he loved him, 'Of course I love you Lord you know that I love you.'

He also pledged unswerving fidelity to Jesus when he said, '...even if all these others leave you I will never leave you...' and we know what happened next.

Yet for all Peter's faults he was given the keys of the Kingdom of heaven. Jesus knows our weakness and doesn't hold it against us, of course he knows we're human, he made us that way.

St Paul of course was even worse. He was responsible for the execution of thousands of Christians, he took delight in persecuting the Church, he was there when they stoned St Stephen, another deacon, to death, until one day he encountered the force and power of the Lord and was thrown from his horse with a flash of lightning and a booming voice from heaven, 'Saul, Saul why are you persecuting me?'

As we know Paul, although not one of the 12 apostles, went on to become the greatest of the apostles and travelled extensively preaching and setting up Christian communities. But this was far from easy. He had a hard time, he was shipwrecked off the coast of Malta and nearly drowned, was thrown into prison, received a good whipping 8 times, almost stoned to death and almost starved to death. He suffered every kind of torture and pain to make Jesus known to the ends of the earth. He does not complain though, he blesses God in his sufferings and gives thanks as if they were a great gift, counting himself happy that he was able to suffer for the honour of Christ.

So these are our role models, SS Peter and Paul, their statues are at the back of the church, Peter holding the keys, Paul holding a double edged sword and a book of the epistles he wrote and which we hear at every Sunday Mass. When they eventually got to Rome they both suffered martyrdom.

You might think those times are over but they clearly aren't. The wave of civil unrest that has swept the country recently is capable of engulfing us on our own doorstep. How long before those who want to remove statues of historical figures they don't like decide they want to take down our statues of Jesus, Our Lady and the saints we hold so dear. It's already happening in this country for example St Boniface has been smashed in Devon because it offends non Christians. In Europe, which is full of statues of Jesus, Mary and many saints statues are under threat. In America the spokesman for BLM has said that all statues of Jesus across America should be destroyed if He appears too white. Bishops, priests and the Catholic faithful have been attacked trying to protect statues. These brave souls are willing to be persecuted to defend their faith. It will come here one day soon.

(Read more on [www.lifesitenews.com](http://www.lifesitenews.com))

It's now official, Christianity is the most persecuted religion in the world but Our Lord told us this would happen, in John 15 Jesus says, 'If the world hates you know that it hated me first...'

What we need to pray for is faith. The apostles had faith and confidence and most importantly courage. On the day of Pentecost after receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit in the form of tongues of fire they fearlessly went out into the streets and preached the Good News and everyone heard them in their own language. They healed the sick and worked miracles and on that first Pentecost day many thousands were converted and believed. The apostles had unshakeable faith in the risen Jesus.

Many of our problems in the Church today are due to a lack of faith, faith in the love of God, in salvation brought about by the death and resurrection of Jesus, faith in the Gospel and the teachings of the Church, yes, even the difficult and unpopular ones.

But this is the example of SS Peter and Paul for us today, men of faith, men of courage, like so many saints and martyrs through the last 2000 years, men and women prepared to die for Jesus.

May the Lord bless us and Our Lady protect us.

Deacon Kevin