

Reflecting
on the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul



Archdiocese of
Liverpool

Prepare to be attentive to *The God Who Speaks in this story.*



- Light a candle or tea light if possible.
- Perhaps place a flower from the garden or a plant next to the light.

Let us begin our time of prayer for the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul.

Breathe deeply and allow yourself to become still.

Let the music help you to relax. Ask for God's grace and light to fill your heart and your mind as you open to the Word.



By all your saints still striving, for all your saints at rest,
Your holy name, O Jesus, for evermore be blessed.
You rose, our King victorious, that they might wear the crown
And ever shine in splendour reflected from your throne.

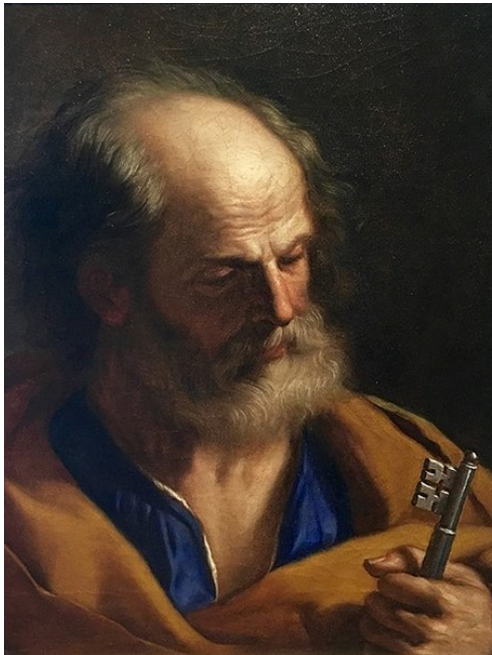
We praise you for Saint Peter, we praise you for Saint Paul;
They taught both Jew and Gentile that Christ is all in all.
To cross and sword they yielded and saw the kingdom come:
O God, your two apostles won life through martyrdom.

Then let us praise the Father and worship God the Son
And sing to God the Spirit, eternal Three in One,
Till all the ransomed number who stand before the throne,
Ascribe all pow'r and glory and praise to God alone.

Spend some time just looking at the three images.



- Where is your eye drawn to?
- What feelings are you experiencing?
- What are you noticing?



Pray the Responsorial Psalm for today.



The angel of the Lord rescues those who revere him.

I will bless the Lord at all times,
his praise always on my lips;
in the Lord my soul shall make its boast.
The humble shall hear and be glad.

The angel of the Lord rescues those who revere him.

Glorify the Lord with me.
Together let us praise his name.
I sought the Lord and he answered me;
from all my terrors he set me free.

The angel of the Lord rescues those who revere him.

Look towards him and be radiant;
let your faces not be abashed.
This poor man called, the Lord heard him
and rescued him from all his distress.

The angel of the Lord rescues those who revere him.

The angel of the Lord is encamped
around those who revere him, to rescue them.
Taste and see that the Lord is good.
He is happy who seeks refuge in him.

The angel of the Lord rescues those who revere him.

Now, either read slowly to yourself this story from the Gospel according to Matthew or better still, read it aloud, again slowly.

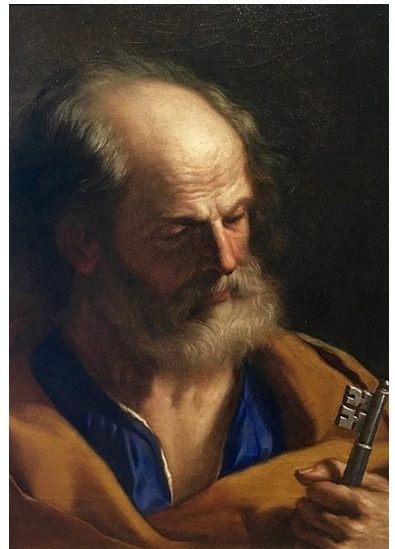
From the Gospel according to Matthew 16:13-19



Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, 'Who do people say that the Son of Man is?' And they said, 'Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?'

Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.'

And Jesus answered him, 'Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.



The Gospel of the Lord.

Spend a few moments allowing some aspect of the Gospel – a word, phrase or image – to touch you more deeply and read this part a second time, aloud if possible.

Now move on to this week's reflection by Kathleen McGhee SND.



"Who do people say that I am?"

How often in life have you found yourself saying reassuringly to someone, "Just be yourself – you'll be fine!" How often have you had that self-same thing said to you, "Just be yourself!" Have you ever come away from such an encounter wondering, "What does it actually mean?" After all, short of a talented acting ability or a propensity for pretence, who can I be except myself? So what is meant by, "Just be yourself". Who do they think I am? And, if asked, would anyone really tell us?

The question was clearly hanging around, even for Jesus. First he wanted to know what people thought of the Son of Man, asked in the third person. Then it changed: that was not at the heart of what he wanted to hear. So his next question is asked in the first and second person: "But you, who do you think I am?"

It becomes more personal, more intimate and much more important to him. It is addressed to his closest friends, those with whom he has come to share all that he has learnt from his Father, those whom he loves.

It is Peter who speaks up on behalf of them all: "You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God". What a moment for them both! Jesus's gradual realisation of who he was has been passed on. It has been revealed not only to himself but now to Peter and hopefully to the other disciples. His Father has spoken. And for this declaration of faith Peter is greatly rewarded. Whether he returns the question to Jesus, "Who do you say I am, Jesus?" or not, he gets his answer. "Be yourself"

addressed to Peter now means, “Be Peter, the rock on which I will build my Church ...”

There we have it, in that moment of shared identity as it were: Peter the fisherman; Peter the man who had second thoughts about walking on water; Peter who is to betray his best friend when he needs him most and go on to doubt whether anything is going to become of it all after the resurrection – so he will just go back to the fishing; that Peter is now chosen to be the rock on which the Church would be built.

“Simon, Son of Jonah. You are a happy man! Because it was not flesh and blood that revealed this to you but my Father in Heaven.”

Jesus’ mission is drawing to its completion: it is time to hand it on. They know who he is: they are the friends to whom he has entrusted his identity and the message given to him by the Father.

He is the Christ, Son of the Living God. And Peter? Peter is the far from perfect but very loving man with an ordinary job, to whom is given at that moment a most extraordinary mission: “You are Peter and on this rock I will build my Church and I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven”, a mission which has in time affected the lives of us all.

Take a few moments to receive and reflect on these two sonnets in honour of St Peter and St Paul by Malcolm Guite.

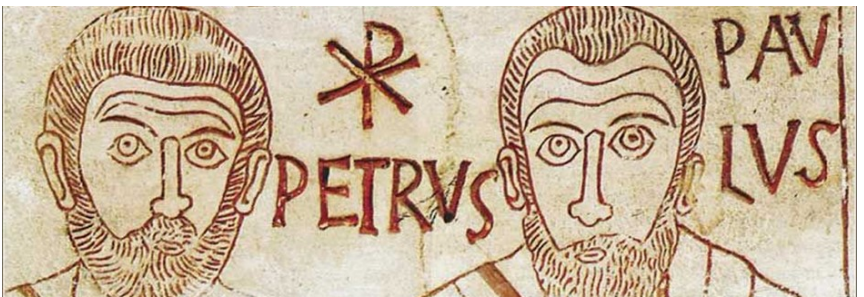


A Sonnet for St Peter by Malcolm Guite

Impulsive master of misunderstanding
You comfort me with all your big mistakes;
Jumping the ship before you make the landing,
Placing the bet before you know the stakes.
I love the way you step out without knowing,
The way you sometimes speak before you think,
The way your broken faith is always growing,
The way he holds you even when you sink.
Born to a world that always tried to shame you,
Your shaky ego vulnerable to shame,
I love the way that Jesus chose to name you,
Before you knew how to deserve that name.
And in the end your Saviour let you prove
That each denial is undone by love.

Apostle by Malcolm Guite

An enemy whom God has made a friend,
A righteous man discounting righteousness,
Last to believe and first for God to send,
He found the fountain in the wilderness.
Thrown to the ground and raised at the same moment,
A prisoner who set his captors free,
A naked man with love his only garment,
A blinded man who helped the world to see,
A Jew who had been perfect in the law,
Blesses the flesh of every other race
And helps them see what the apostles saw;
The glory of the Lord in Jesus' face.
Strong in his weakness, joyful in his pains,
And bound by love, he freed us from our chains.



As a result of your reflection, offer some prayers of intercession for the people and situations in our world today that seem to you to be most in need.

Let's begin with the prayer Archbishop Malcolm has asked us to pray at this time and then you may like to include one or more of prayers that follow and/or add your own:



God Our Father,
each person is precious to You.
You are the Giver of life.
Have mercy on us and protect us at this time,
as the coronavirus threatens health and life.
You are an ever-present Helper in time of trouble.
Watch over those who are suffering,
give strength to those who are aiding the sick
and give courage to all in this time of anxiety.
We ask this of you in the name of your Son,
Jesus Christ.
Amen.

We pray for all who have been called to leadership – in our church and in our world ... may they always be aware of the responsibility they have to act out of a spirit of service, putting the needs of others before their own.

We pray for all who work to overcome injustice in its many forms ... may they be given courage and strength to persevere in the struggle.

We pray for expectant mothers and fathers awaiting the birth of their child ... may they be supported in these times when contact during the birthing process is limited, and still experience the joy of new life arriving in the world.

We pray for all who care for the sick and dying, the elderly and the vulnerable ... may they have the resources they need to be able to fulfil their role with kindness and compassion.

We pray for the work of our diocesan Synod ... that our community will wisely discern where the Holy Spirit is leading us during the coming months.

We pray now in the words Jesus gave us:

Our Father,
who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

To end your time of reflection, listen to *¿Quién dicen que soy yo?/Who do you say I am?*



*“¿Quién dicen que soy yo?”
Who do you say that I am?*

“Dicen algunos
que eres Juan Bautista.
Otros han dicho que eres Elías”.

*“¿Quién dicen que soy yo?”
Who do you say that I am?*

“Others have been hearing some who swear that they surely know that you are a prophet from of old and you’ve come back to life.”

“¿Quién dicen que soy yo?”
Who do you say that I am?

“¡Eres el Mesías!”
“You are the Messiah!”
“Al morir por causa mía
ganarán la vida eterna”
“Anyone who dies for my sake
will have found eternal life.”

“¿Quién dicen que soy yo?”
Who do you say that I am?

Acknowledgements

Cover image: detail of Coptic icon of St Peter and St Paul.

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