

Sunday June 28th, Feast of Saints Peter and Paul

Good Morning from St. Bernadette's.

I hope everyone is keeping safe and well, and following all the advice from the government and the medics about what we should be doing in this time of crisis.

And I trust everyone continues to pray for all our needs at this time.

And so it is that today we celebrate the Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul, transferred from tomorrow the 29th. Of course, if it wasn't for the changing of their names, today's Feast would be that of Saints Simon and Saul. As soon as the two men whom we celebrate tonight fully professed their faith in Christ – on the shore of Lake Galilee, and on the road to Damascus, their names were changed. Quite appropriately, too, as not only were their names changed, their whole lives were changed in ways that they no doubt would both have considered unimaginable, and perhaps most importantly for us today, they themselves were going to go on and change millions of other people's lives through their living out and preaching of the Gospel of Christ.

Peter's life was completely changed from being a fisherman on the shores of Lake Galilee with his brother Andrew, to becoming the founder of the Church of Rome and Apostles to the Hebrew nation. From the moment he was introduced to Jesus by his brother, his life was changed. He often misunderstood Jesus. He denied he knew him. Yet he built up a relationship with Jesus which allowed for change and growth, something which he took forward into the formation of the Christian faith.

Paul too, allowed himself to grow and change. The second reading today from Paul's Letter to Timothy describes Paul looking back on his life of faith. From the moment of his conversion Paul is so confident that he has been faithful in the Lord. And he knows God has been faithful to him. And despite everything he stood for before his conversion, the destruction of the Church, he still understands that this was all part of his journey, having being chosen before he was formed in the womb – neatly referring to the prophet Jeremiah. Throughout all of this, he knows that the Lord has been standing by him, in happy times, and in hours of darkness and confusion, suffering and persecution.

And that's what we are celebrating today. Today's feast of Saints Peter and Paul is a celebration of the Church, showing God at work in people, in us, changing us to become more like him. And being changed to become more like him the values of Christ, preached and taught to us by Peter and Paul can today be demonstrated to the world through all members of the Church who are - well the

Beatitudes always put it best - poor in spirit, meek, hunger and thirst for justice, who build peace, and are ready to suffer for the sake of the Gospel message. And when we fall, God is there, ready to forgive and be merciful, and in doing so offer new opportunities for responding to his call. The example of Peter and Paul is one of people who were prepared to change and grow and strenuously and tirelessly work for the Gospel of Christ. Let's pray for that growth and change in us, as individuals, and as a Church, the Church founded on those great saints Peter and Paul. And let us pray that we will remain true to the faith of the apostles;

*Almighty God,
whose blessed apostles Peter and Paul
glorified you by their martyrdom:
Grant that your Church,
instructed by their teaching and example,
and knit together in unity by your Spirit,
may ever stand firm upon the one foundation,
which is Jesus Christ our Lord;
who lives and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.*

Today let us offer our lives to God with the same spirit of Saints Peter and Paul and sing together 'Here I am, Lord.' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mgLWH5RdtPk>

I was looking around for a suitable picture for today's Feast, and came up with this one from five years ago, the only time I have actually celebrated Mass in St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. This was in the Chapel of St. Stephen of Hungary, and is situated right next to the tomb of Pope St. John Paul. It was a great privilege.

Well the weather hasn't half changed, with strong winds forecast for the next day or two here in Bispham, along with heavy rain tomorrow. Perhaps it's a moment to remember that ancient Irish Blessing with its beautiful references to the weather. Originally written in Gaelic, the prayer – the author is unknown – has three main images, namely wind, sun, and rain. Fittingly for something written so long ago, the ancient Irish's deep connection to nature and Ireland's ever-changing elements shine through. The reference to the wind can be taken as a reference to the Holy Spirit, who came as a '*mighty wind*' at Pentecost. The sun's warmth alludes to God's Mercy which the New Testament, in Luke 1:78, tells us '*by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven.*' The mention of rain is thought to be symbolic of God's provision – nothing will grow without the rain. And in

Isaiah 41:13 God tells us *'I Will Hold You Always in the Palm of My Hand.'* A perfect little prayer and blessing for today – and every day.

May the road rise up to meet you.

May the wind be always at your back.

May the sun shine warm upon your face;

the rains fall soft upon your fields and until we meet again,

may God hold you in the palm of His hand.

You may like to listen to a beautiful sung version

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hA1F0uOuMFs>

Church will be open for Private Prayer from 1-4pm today. Many thanks to our Stewards who make this possible. If you want a word with me, I will be floating around, so just come and bang on the side sacristy door. From next Saturday we resume a new Mass timetable, and there'll be more information of this through the week. Everyone will continue to be dispensed from Mass and receiving Holy Communion. Things seemed to have moved very quickly and are changing all the time, so watch this space for some more news.

I had a mail from my brother about Friday's Message; *'Grecian 2000 and Boney M are references that date us both horribly!'* and I guess he's right!

Mass for the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul is available on the YouTube at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6N4h8PodpVA&feature=youtu.be>

Our hymns are 'Be Thou My Vision' and 'Faith of Our Fathers.'

The official link for the Mass Sheet is

<https://www.rpbooks.co.uk/uploads/www.rpbooks.co.uk/15SsPeterPaul.pdf>

Once again many thanks for all your return mails. Apologies if I don't reply immediately, sometimes they seem to get lost (or kind of bunched up). Any suggestions for ways to keep our faith and spirits up at this time are most welcome!

And remember, St. Bernadette's is not closed, though the building is, most of the time. We're just doing things differently for a while, until we are allowed to gather together once more, more stronger, more faithful, more loving, more creative, and more grateful for the amazing community that is St. Bernadette's.

With love and faith in Jesus.

Fr. P.