

The Feast of St Peter and St Paul

Perfection of a kind is what we are often after.

The right result

The perfect conclusion

But this is more often a contradiction of our lives experience

Perfection demanded as a result of a lack of confidence

As a result ironically of the fear of imperfection

When the Church was accepted by the powers that ruled in the 4th Century

When it became the Roman Catholic Church

Then the rituals of Rome the Empire had their influence

The power centred in Rome had its influence

Thus perfection of a kind was what we were after

Church Law, that is canon law modelled itself upon Roman Law

The structure of administration of the Church modelled itself upon Rome

Not Governors

but Bishops

And Diocese regionally governed.

Even the language that we used was Latin, although Greek was more common in the time of Jesus.

Recently with the election of Pope Leo we saw the pomp and circumstance of Rome in the ritual and events that took place

Indeed

The late Pope Frances who lived by simplicity could not get away with a simple funeral.

Thus when we look to St Peter the first Pope

When we look to St Paul the first teacher

There is a temptation to seek out the perfection of Rome

That St Peter be above fault, as Caesar was above criticism

That loyalty to St Paul, be as essential as obedience to whoever ruled the Empire

However our faith is based not upon Rome but upon Jesus Christ
Our model not the one who conquers, but the one who is crucified

The structures of Rome have indeed proved useful
The disciplines of Rome have been at times of crisis, essential.
The organisation of the proclamation and celebration of the Gospel possible only through this means

The Gospel is the good news.

But as you would not shoot the messenger who brought you bad news
So one must be careful about attributing too much credit to the messenger who brings good news

The message brought

The Gospel

And sacramental tradition is what is important

The messenger is simply the means of communication down the generations

Indeed let us look at the Gospel

St Peter the first Pope plays the role quite often of forced humility in the ministry of Christ

He betrays Jesus three times

And is forgiven

He gets it wrong and strikes out at the high priest servant

And is corrected

He excludes the uncircumcised from membership of the Church

And is persuaded

St Peter the first Pope loves with integrity

and begins again

Indeed let us look at the Acts of the Apostles
St Paul the first teacher fully approves of the death of St Stephen
And moves from self-righteous blindness, to physical blindness
He is scourged, stoned, shipwrecked and laughed at for the sake of the Gospel
And gets up and begins again
He is of powerful eloquence
But makes a weakness his greatest boast, for it from the weak that God confounds the strong

So on this feast of St Peter and St Paul
We recognise the value of the Vatican and Rome
However we are called upon to look beyond the superficial administration of the Roman Empire
We are called upon by the teachings of St Peter
We are called upon by the example of St Paul
To accept the humility of faith
To share with Christ the crucifixion
And to make a boast of our weakness
For we are weak
But God proclaims "My grace is enough for you"
"My grace is enough for you"

Accept the weakness of St Peter
Accept the weakness of St Paul
Accept your own weakness
And you will grow strong
And the Church will grow strong.