



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

St Peter and St Paul-June 28th 2020

***Readings: Acts 12: 1-11, Psalm 33, 2 Timothy 4: 6-8, 17-18,
Matthew 16: 13-19***

Some years ago when, newly ordained as a Catholic priest, I was covering a Sunday Mass in another parish, a cradle Catholic, notable in his community and in the family of faith, hung back at the door to have a word once the congregation had departed. When we were on our own he launched into an effusive series of compliments and thanksgivings for the rich gifts that converts like me had brought to the Catholic Church. I tell you this, not to milk another round of applause or to shock you by my immodesty in repeating this story but because I want to share with you my reply.

‘Thank you for your kind words and your encouragement but I want you to understand just how grateful we converts are for you cradle Catholics. You have kept the flag flying while we, too often, have wandered in the wilderness. Unless you had been faithful there would have been no Church for us to come home to. We owe you more than we can ever say.’

Today we celebrate the feast of the two great Apostles, Peter and Paul. Compare and contrast, as they say in examination papers.

Peter, a lifer, an early call, a man who had spent years in the Real Presence.

Paul, a 'johnny come lately', a man whose early ministry was utterly opposed to the revelation of Christ and a vicious opponent of the true church.

Peter, a secondary modern boy, a working man, whose response to Jesus was extravagant and sometimes confused.

Paul, the bright grammar school boy from a privileged home. The intellectual whose commitment was, once garnered, unflagging and irresistible.

Peter, the first Apostle to acknowledge Christ. Paul the only Apostle to have denied Him.

Peter, the man who ran away at the moment of supreme crisis in the garden and from the Cross but who ended up walking into strange cities and honouring Christ by his death on an upside down Cross on the Vatican Hill.

Paul, the unstoppable force of nature whose response to torture and stoning was to get up and walk straight back into the torturers town and continue where he left off. 'As I was saying, before I was so rudely interrupted.....'

Peter, whose understanding is visceral, emotional yet grows in intellectual assent. Paul, whose intellect is so fierce that Peter confesses that it's sometimes difficult to get the hang of what Paul is saying.

Peter, whose knowledge of Jesus is in time.

Paul whose mystical encounter is outside time.

Both magnificent servants of the Lord.

Both necessary to the Gospel adventure.

Both faithful to what Jesus has called them to do.

Both heroes of the Church.

Both witnesses in blood of their love for Jesus.

Cradle and convert bound together in the great enterprise of salvation.

Peter the Christ appointed leader of the Church.

Paul the dynamic engine of the universal mission.

They are utterly complementary and a constant reminder to us of our need for one another and the rich diversity of God's sovereign choice of us,

His most unlikely servants .

Today, as we remember with thanksgiving, our first beloved Pope and the one the Missal dubbed, 'The Teacher of the World' , let us give thanks for one another, cradle and convert, and move forward together on the mission field -afraid or fearless – walking into strange cities and telling people about Jesus.