

The Feast of St Peter and St Paul - 29th June

Peter-tide always reminds me of ordination; a day when the long Camino journey of study, led by tutors and the Holy Spirit, comes to a conclusion - that day when one journey ends and a new one starts in Christ. This year we remember in our prayers those who have completed the course, but have had their ordinations delayed by Covid 19.

My own ordination was not held on the weekend of St Peter and Paul. Peterborough Cathedral have an (understandable) policy in that instead of ordaining new deacons and priests on that day, they hold their patronal festival to Peter - sung evensong, guest preacher and tea and strawberries in the bishop's garden, with the great and the good of the diocese invited (and much prayer for the rain to keep away).

I had been serving at a church in the city centre and close to the Cathedral, a parish in a poor high-density area. I recall at one of the strawberry-teas seeing my Vicar looking downcast. I asked what was wrong and he said, "All these people in their finery, yet over that wall there is our parish where very few can even afford a new pair of shoes". In fairness, all the people at the tea had given much of their time to support the diocese and their own churches, and perhaps they deserved a cup of tea and strawberries - yet his point has stayed with me ever since.

Today then, we recall two of the great Camino leaders of the Church. Peter, the rock (Rocky?) had denied Jesus three times, but was reinstated and told to "feed my sheep", and went on to be the first Pope. Saul who persecuted the earliest Christians was struck down on the Damascus Road and thereafter became Paul the apostle to the Gentiles. There is hope for us all.

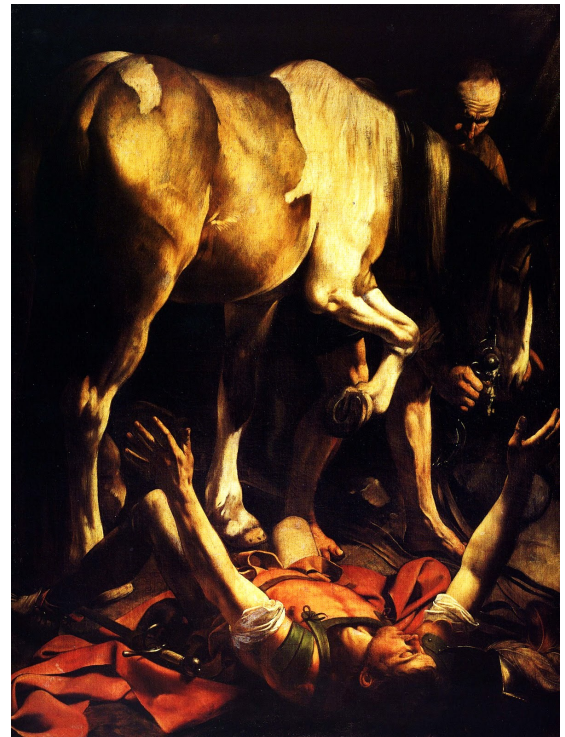
Both travelled widely, and others have followed in their footprints and sought to follow their teaching. Both would have known the apostles including of course James the Great. You know all about them with no need for me to elaborate,

At this time the apostles and the crowd of witnesses are watching over and praying for us. Praying for the Camino chaplains, frustrated that we can't be in ministry in Santiago at this time, and are trying to make key decisions in their home parishes. Praying with the pilgrims whose plans to travel have been put on hold. Praying for those who rely on the Camino to keep their shops, restaurants, travel companies and albergués solvent. So many are

waiting but at a time when we need encouragement, let me offer a couple of texts from our apostles of the day which I hope will do that:-

From 1 Peter 5 - *"Discipline yourselves; keep alert.* Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour. Resist him, steadfast in your faith, for you know that your brothers and sisters* throughout the world are undergoing the same kinds of suffering. And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, support, strengthen, and establish you. To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen".*

And from 2 Timothy 1 - *"I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands; for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline".*



'Crucifixion of St Peter' and 'The Conversion of St Paul'
Caravaggio - Santa Maria del Popolo - Rome

Peter and Paul came to be seen as having different rôles to play within the leadership of the Church: Peter in witnessing to the Lordship of Christ and Paul in developing an understanding of its meaning for Christ's followers. Peter and Paul have been remembered jointly on this day since the very early days of the Church, it being regarded as the anniversary of their martyrdom in Rome in about the year 64.



"Ordination"

Nicholas Poussin

P.S. I was ordained the next weekend, in July, which serendipitously fell on my birthday. I was in the local deanery chapter with Stephen Cottrell - then a Canon at the cathedral, and now, very shortly to be Archbishop of York - who led our pre-ordination retreat and preached at the service - and with Tom, our son in the choir, it was a truly memorable occasion.

Blessings to you if your ordination anniversary falls at this time.

Some Prayers

Collect for today :-

Almighty God, whose blessed apostles Peter and Paul glorified you in their death as in their life: grant that your Church, inspired by their teaching and example, and made one by your Spirit, may ever stand firm upon the one foundation, Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. AMEN

At this time of continued uncertainty, we pray for so much, but in particular for our Camino Chaplains as they offer their thoughts and deliberations here over the weeks to come. We pray for Sybille and all those in Spain as the Covid 19 restrictions there are eased yet uncertainty remains, and for the church in Spain, and those whose livelihood depends on the Camino. We pray for those who are working to look after all those who cannot look after themselves and all who feel that they are alone.

Please allow us to pray for - You, your family, your congregation, your exploration of new ways of ministry in difficult times - the things on your heart this day. May the Christ who defies the rules of social distancing walk closely with you, now and always.

Blessing

God the Father, by whose glory Christ was raised from the dead strengthen you to walk with him in his risen life and the blessing of Almighty God Father Son and Holy Spirit Be with you as you continue your Camino- and for all time

Fr Bob

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