

## Reflection for the Solemnity of Saints Peter & Paul

Seeing the ‘big picture’ is often very helpful, so reading a biography can help us understand a person better and this is likewise true of events and issues that arise in our lives as individuals and together. Taking the time to listen, think and understand may have been more possible during the last few weeks of lockdown, but usually we find the time eludes us. Combined with prayer, our time invested in broadening our understanding can allow the Holy Spirit to bring the grace we need to respond in a Christian way. Understanding the context of a biblical reading in the Mass can help us, not only to comprehend the reading better, but to apply it in our own lives in a more intentional and considered way. The homily can also help us to get the ‘bigger picture’ - to appreciate that we are part of God’s loving story of salvation. God guides us to his loving heart, and we come to understand that he will stand back from our private agenda’s unless they help build his reign. This reign is described in the prayers for the Solemnity of Christ the King as *a kingdom of truth and life, a kingdom of holiness and grace, a kingdom of justice, love and peace.*<sup>1</sup>

The saints we remember during the year are opportunities to celebrate people who are open to God’s bigger picture. The main parts of the stories of Saints Peter and Paul are well known, but if we think about how God worked in their lives it may help us to see how he might be working in ours. The aim is to allow God to work in us and through us. His presence with us will take a different ‘shape’ according to our character and circumstances. Peter and Paul were not like one another, except in their openness to God’s grace. Jesus says to Peter in today’s Gospel, following his confession of faith: *“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.”* In our second reading, writing to Timothy, St. Paul says *“The Lord stood by me and gave me power, so that through me the whole message might be proclaimed for all the pagans to hear.”* God is working to build a strong bond of faith with them and through this to reach out to others.

How do you see yourself within God’s bigger picture? Through the events of our lives we will be responding to the call made by God to build his *kingdom of truth and life, his kingdom of holiness and grace, his kingdom of justice, love and peace.*<sup>2</sup> Looking at this may make us feel daunted, but the ‘bigger picture’ helps us to understand that this is God’s work which we co-operate with, even though, at times we may resist. The lives of the Saints Peter and Paul are not ones without incident. They are lives that have their ups and downs, they made their mistakes and even had disputes with one another. When I was in seminary an Archbishop, who has since retired, told us that when he faced difficulties in his diocese, he took solace in the letters St. Paul wrote to the churches he founded, trying to solve problems, disputes and encourage them to keep faithful in tough times.

From the lives of Saints Peter and Paul the message that God works through our humanity is reinforced. This is the message from the saints old and new. I know that I have met people who will never be canonised, but they have shown to me the love of God. Through them God’s love has been made present and that kingdom we all seek has been made a little closer. They know they are part of God’s bigger picture. We ask God to help us to continue to see that bigger picture of his loving work, and most importantly, the indispensable part in it he has called us to play. Whatever our identity or condition<sup>3</sup> we all have our part to play.

With best wishes and prayers, Canon David

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<sup>1</sup> Preface of Christ, King of the Universe, Roman Missal

<sup>2</sup> Preface of Christ, King of the Universe, Roman Missal

<sup>3</sup> St. Paul’s Letter to the Galatians 3:28