

# Encouragement

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Universality of the Church and Faith of Martyrs

THE HOST APOSTOLATE

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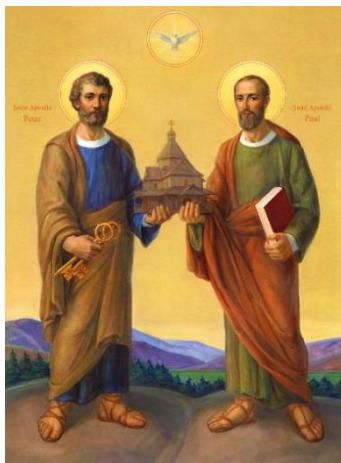
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At the end of June we have the very special feast of Ss. Peter and Paul. Why is it so special? These two men were not only crucial to the development of the Church, but Peter being also named as the leader of the church and Paul becoming an evangeliser and teacher. Both paid the price of their love of Jesus by being martyred. Their path to following Jesus could not have been more different. Peter a fisherman, passionate, strong, and faithful eventually denies that he knows Jesus and pays for this with deep regret and sorrow ameliorated only by Jesus Himself who offers him a chance to make good but does not change His view of his leadership. 'Do you love me Peter more than these'. Jesus' words which must have stung Peter, Cephas, the rock, deeply, as he had said that he would follow Him anywhere. Peter's reply of love enabled him to continue, reaffirming to himself that he did love the master but also reminding him that he could be weak, an important aspect of leadership.

Paul on the other hand was fiery, educated, and a hater of this 'hybrid group' of Jews that followed Jesus to the extent of persecuting and killing them. He was orthodox and proud of it... until.. Jesus himself intervened after His death, with the words throwing him to the ground, 'Saul, Saul why do you persecute me?' Paul's conversion took him to places spiritually that he would not have ever dreamt of or chosen to go to. Going through a re-education and not fully accepted by the Apostles at first (he was also part Gentile) he becomes the teacher to the Gentiles and his legacy and teaching have added flesh to our understanding of the churches' mission. His infused knowledge and grasp of the teaching of Jesus endures to today in his letters of faith. How much do we owe him for this as we glean the path of development of the early church.

Yet these two men with different ideas worked together and while not always agreeing sought

guidance and received it. Both men loved God and both men died for the faith they had. This is especially important in our times. We live in turbulent times in the world and this is re-echoed in the church. Many pay the price for their faith, in many countries, where being a Christian marks you out for persecution, simply because you profess this. There are too many places to mention but too often forgotten about. We after all are 'one body' in Jesus and often forget the universality of the church. We are all Brothers and Sisters. Yet perhaps forgotten is the fact that the church developed differently in different part of the world. There are many different ways of, for example, of celebrating Mass, different rites as they are called, all within the Catholic Church, not schismatic, but with different liturgical practices. There are Melkites, Maronites, Chaldeans (now under such threat in Iran) and many have ways of praying older than those practiced in the west. Do we ever reflect on this and that they are part of the principle of the universality of the Church.



The Church teaches us that the Church is indeed One, Holy, Catholic, meaning Universal and Apostolic, teaching that should make us reflect deeply. There have always been differing opinions about aspects of church liturgy and practice, even teachings, but they have been overcome by faith in the essential nature of the church as 'One' or in submission to a truth however unpalatable. However, the deeper divisions that occurred throughout history have led to much deeper fissures and a disunity that does not echo the unity of faith that we are called to uphold. While some wounds heal over time and we learn to understand, they nevertheless cause harm to the Body of Christ. This always weakens us spiritually as a group of believers divided will bring about a fall of the structure leaving only those whose faith and not just opinion to hold firm. This month

**'How can the soul walk aright and not stray, except by following the straight road of the law of Almighty God and of the Church?'**

St John of the Cross

too we have the great 'Feast of the Body and Blood of Christ, Corpus Christi'. This should remind us of the importance of unity among believers through the shedding of the Jesus' blood for us all.

At this time we have many divisions in the church. These can be on denominational grounds, on historic differences, because of a lack of true appreciation of the history or an inward mentality that exalts only what is familiar to us and not the dynamism of a Creator God who unities us all in love and service. We live in a time when information is readily available through 'mass media' and yet we are selective in our choice of what we want to hear, so never learning and being open to others in a constructive way. Surely Ss. Peter and Paul should be our guides in this. How much they had to overcome in themselves to be able to work together?

Specifically, too we must be very cautious about anything that leads to disunity and fragmentation. During the pandemic there have been great differences in adherence to practices in the church. Where they have been merely due to local circumstances, sizes of church etc. and they are of little consequence but there have been other practices that deeply affected believers who saw a profound lack of faith in the actions taken. There is a vast difference between that which merely protects, and that which alters the nature of faith filled practices, and of that very principle of the unity of faith of believers i.e. the principle of universality of faith. There is also now a feeling that opinion and rights take precedent over truth and belief as the principle that should be the guide. I wonder how many people refer to the teaching of the church when in doubt about any issue? The information is available, but do we seek it. There is also a disunity about following of this 'one' or that 'one' so strongly rejected by St Paul. 'My brothers, some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you? What I mean is this: Individuals among you are saying, "I follow Paul" "I follow Apollos" "I follow Cephas" or "I follow Christ" is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized into the name of Paul?'  
1 Corinthians 1-12

It is important to ask ourselves these questions. Currently, the world needs witnesses to a unity of faith and purpose rather than wrangling about issues

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that at best simply divide, and at worse, cause confusion, doubt, and fear. As well as being universal the church is also called to be Holy. This should lead us to the virtues of simplicity and kindness, tolerance, and prudence. Without these we cannot hope to witness to our beliefs and demonstrate by our actions that the Church exists for all people everywhere. This perhaps, should encourage us to seek reconciliation (both practical and Sacramental) and be strengthened by God's ever abiding Presence with His people and Love of our Brothers and Sisters. A thought for June perhaps...

Halina Holman

### Pope Francis

**'Just as God transformed Simon into Peter and Saul into Paul, so he is calling each one of us, in order to make us living stones with which to build a renewed Church and a renewed humanity. There are always those who destroy unity and stifle prophecy, yet the Lord believes in us and he asks you: 'Do you want to be a builder of unity? Do you want to be a prophet of my heaven on earth?' Let us be challenged by Jesus, and find the courage to say to him: 'Yes, I do'.**

Rome 2020

### Prayer for all people

Let us pray that those for whom faith is difficult be strengthened. Those that are persecuted be upheld. Those who suffer illness with little support be aided and that the Church becomes the Body of Christ witnessing to Him.



### Feast Days in June

1<sup>st</sup> St. Justin, Martyr

3<sup>rd</sup> St. Charles Lwanga & Comp., 5<sup>th</sup> St. Boniface

**6<sup>th</sup> The Body & Blood of Christ (10<sup>th</sup> Sunday Ord. T.)**

7<sup>th</sup> St. Robert of Newminster, 8<sup>th</sup> St. William of York

9<sup>th</sup> St. Columba

**11<sup>th</sup> Sacred Heart of Jesus**

**12<sup>th</sup> Immaculate Heart of Mary**

**13<sup>th</sup> Eleventh Sunday of Ordinary Time**

(also St. Anthony)

**20<sup>th</sup> Twelfth Sunday of Ordinary Time**

21<sup>st</sup> St. Aloysius Gonzaga

22<sup>nd</sup> Ss. John Fisher & Thomas More

23<sup>rd</sup> St. Etheldreda

**24<sup>th</sup> The Birth of John the Baptist**

**27<sup>th</sup> Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

28<sup>th</sup> St. Irenaeus

**29<sup>th</sup> Ss. Peter & Paul (Holy Day of Obligation)**



**Appeal response.... Blessings for all your contributions**