

## CONVERTED

Peter and Paul were both sinners, both flawed but both eventually allowed Jesus to get so close that they were converted in mind and heart. Peter acknowledged his denial and experienced anew the mercy and reconciliation that were the hallmarks of Jesus' ministry. And he became its model in his own ministry where, throughout his life in every community he visited, he would be known as both the chosen, the Jesus denier and the forgiven and reconciled one.



Paul would hear the voice, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" And, with the help of a probably terrified Ananias, he began to realise that Jesus the risen Christ was now embodied in this motley community he was persecuting. So much so that in hurting them he was hurting the Messiah. And he goes and lives in silence for a few years until he sees that he and every other baptised person is now Christ in the world, each one of us refracting the divine-human mystery in a unique and particular way. From this encounter will come his teaching on the mystical body of Christ and his trust that God is always in the midst of us, the body.

When Jesus asks each of us today, "But who do you say that I am?", what will we come up with? Will we know him as the one who would reveal God's mercy to us and every other person? Will we, like Peter and Paul, so know ourselves as forgiven as to know every other person as also forgiven? Or will we just come up with some title we have learned long ago, Saviour, Redeemer, so carefully defined but touching neither us nor others?

### Mass text

#### ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

**These are the ones who, living in the flesh, planted the Church with their blood; they drink the chalice of the Lord and became the friends of God. R.**

#### FIRST READING Acts 12:1-11

#### PSALM Psalm 33

**RESPONSE From all my terrors the Lord set me free.**

Or **The angel of the Lord rescues those who revere him.**

- I will bless the Lord at all times, his praise always on my lips; in the Lord my soul shall make its boast. The humble shall hear and be glad. **R.**
- Glorify the Lord with me. Together let us praise his name. I sought the Lord and he answered me; from all my terrors he set me free. **R.**
- Look towards him and be radiant; let your faces not be abashed. This poor man called; the Lord heard him and rescued him from all his distress. **R.**

- The angel of the Lord is encamped around those who revere him, to rescue them. Taste and see that the Lord is good. He is happy who seeks refuge in him. **R.**

#### SECOND READING 2 Timothy 4:6-8. 17-18

#### GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

**Alleluia, alleluia!  
You are Peter and on this rock I will build my Church.  
And the gates of the underworld can never hold out against it.  
Alleluia!**

#### GOSPEL Matthew 16:13-19

#### COMMUNION ANTIPHON

**Peter said to Jesus: You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.  
And Jesus replied: You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church.**

**Next Sunday's Readings:**  
Zechariah 9:9-10  
Romans 8:9. 11-13  
Matthew 11:25-30

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## WHO DO YOU SAY I AM?

Peter and Paul are celebrated today as the two co-founders of the Church. They are this not because they were great intellectuals, although Paul was certainly a scholar, nor because they were great planners or managers, although Peter did have his own fishing business. They are celebrated by the Church across the centuries because in encountering Jesus Christ they were changed. They came to see the world, and others, and God differently; and those encountering them were touched and changed by their transformed lives.



When Jesus asked the disciples, "Who do you say I am?" he was taking a risk. And the answer Peter gave, and which Jesus accepts, was full of danger – depending on how you interpreted it. For some the expected Messiah was a warrior king who would throw out the Roman forces and restore the kingdom of Solomon and its prestige in a renewed Jerusalem. For others the Messiah would be a holy reformer of Temple and cult who would re-establish orthodox practice and holiness and appoint a true high priest to the Temple.

For others the Messiah would be a great teacher and prophet ushering in a new age of pure practice and justice. There were so many models available and all of them, in Jesus' eyes, were a distraction from the coming kingdom, which is why he tends to avoid the title or else to give it his own spin. The Messiah will come but he will ride a donkey, not a war horse, and he will rule from a brutal cross, among those who are poor and destitute, not from a great palace, nor from an imposing throne; something initially Peter could not accept.

Peter is a rather chaotic role model, an enthusiast who could rarely sustain his initial commitment and who under pressure cracked and rejected Jesus. And Paul, the fundamentalist Pharisee and early persecutor of the Christian community, was certainly a hard act for the early Church to cope with.

## Catching the kingdom



David McLoughlin is a teaching theologian who has spent nearly forty years helping to train Christian teachers, ministers and activists. In this week's *Sunday Bulletin*, he reflects on today's feast day.

28 JUNE 2020

SS PETER AND PAUL, APOSTLES

YEAR A

DIVINE OFFICE WEEK I