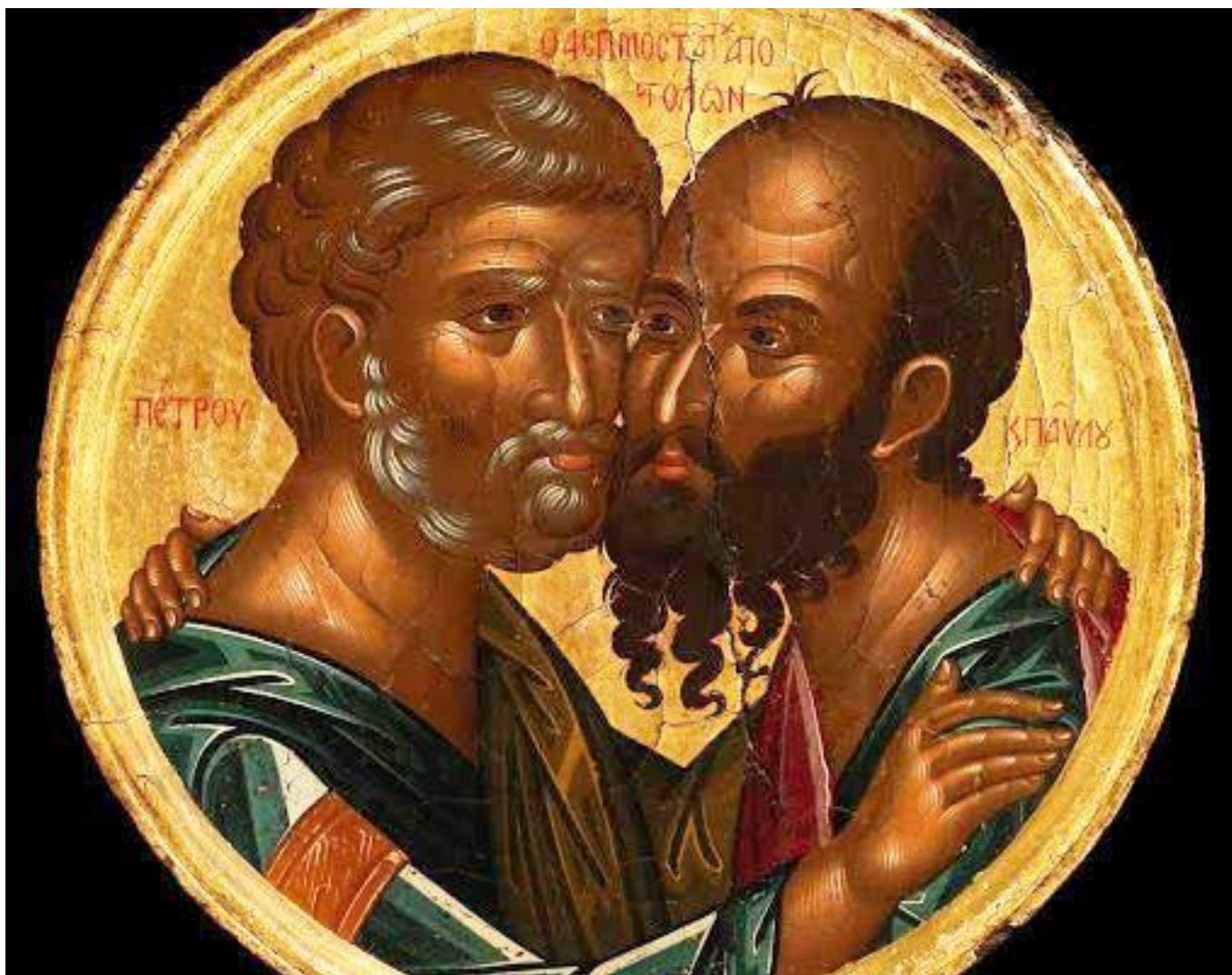


Thursday 29 June 2023

Saints Peter and Paul



Fifteenth century **icon** of Peter and Paul. They share a halo, their cheeks touch, but their eyes do not meet because they stare at the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the centre of their lives. Ashmolean museum, Oxford.

From the very earliest times, Peter and Paul were seen as having different roles within the leadership of the Church: Peter in witnessing to Christ's Lordship and resurrection and Paul in helping to understand its meaning for Jesus' followers through his inspired letters and other writings.

Peter and Paul have been jointly remembered on this day since the earliest days of the Church because it was regarded as the anniversary of their joint martyrdom in Rome in about 64 AD.

Sermon © the Revd Paul Monk.

Liturgy and prayers of intercession © 2000 The Archbishops' Council.

Bible readings © the publishers of the NRSV translation.

The liturgy assumes the service is Eucharistic. The prayers of consecration appear at the end.

The hymn can be accessed via a YouTube link. Please click on the links.

To see service transcripts from previous weeks, please visit the page, <http://www.medlockhead.co.uk/resources/index.htm>

The Introduction

HYMN 1 Lord's Prayer
Lord's Prayer
Lord's Prayer

(traditional words)
(modern words)
(Charlotte Church version)

The welcome

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit

All Amen.

The Lord be with you

All And also with you.

The Preparation

**All Almighty God,
to whom all hearts are open,
all desires known,
and from whom no secrets are hidden:
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you,
and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Our Lord Jesus Christ said:

The first commandment is this:

'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is the only Lord.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,
with all your soul, with all your mind,
and with all your strength.'

And the second is this: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'

There is no other commandment greater than these.

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

All Amen. Lord, have mercy.

Jesus said to his apostles,

'You are my friends if you obey my commands.'

All Almighty God, our heavenly Father,
we have sinned against you
and against our neighbour
in thought and word and deed,
through negligence, through weakness,
through our own deliberate fault.
We are truly sorry
and repent of all our sins.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
who died for us,
forgive us all that is past
and grant that we may serve you
in newness of life
to the glory of your name.
Amen.

Kyrie Confession

Lord Jesus, in your love you invite us to be your friends:

Lord, have mercy.

All Lord, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, in your joy you choose us to go out and bear fruit:

Christ, have mercy.

All Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, in your power you send us to be your faithful witnesses:

Lord, have mercy.

All Lord, have mercy.

Almighty God,
who forgives all who truly repent,
have mercy upon you,
pardon and deliver you from all your sins,
confirm and strengthen you in all goodness,
and keep you in life eternal;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen.

The Gloria

This version of the Gloria is sung to the tune of 'Cwm Rhondda'. Click [here](#) for the tune.

All **Glory be to God in Heaven,
Songs of joy and peace we bring,
Thankful hearts and voices raising,
To creation's Lord we sing.
Lord we thank you, Lord we praise you,
Glory be to God our King:
Glory be to God our King.**

**Lamb of God, who on our shoulders,
Bore the load of this world's sin;
Only Son of God the Father,
You have brought us peace within.
Lord, have mercy, Christ have mercy,
Now your glorious reign begin:
Now your glorious reign begin.**

**You O Son of God are Holy,
You we praise with one accord.
None in heav'n or earth is like you,
Only you are Christ the Lord.
With the Father and the Spirit,
Ever worshipped and adored:
Ever worshipped and adored.**

The Collect for Saints Peter and Paul

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.

All **Amen.**

First reading

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Zechariah

The angel who talked with me returned and woke me up, like someone awakened from sleep. He asked me, 'What do you see?' I answered, 'I see a solid gold lampstand with a bowl at the top and seven lamps on it, with seven channels to the lamps. Also there are two olive trees by it, one on the right of the bowl and the other on its left.'

I asked the angel who talked with me, 'What are these, my lord?' He answered, 'Do you not know what these are?' 'No, my lord,' I replied. So he said to me, 'This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the Lord Almighty.

The seven eyes of the Lord that range throughout the earth will rejoice when they see the chosen capstone in the hand of Zerubbabel?' Then I asked the angel, 'What are these two olive trees on the right and the left of the lampstand?' Again I asked him, 'What are these two olive branches beside the two gold pipes that pour out golden oil? He replied, "Do you not know what these are?" No, my lord, I said. So he said, 'These are the two who are anointed to serve the Lord of all the earth.'

Zechariah 4:1-6a, 10b-end

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

Second reading

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles

About that time King Herod laid violent hands upon some who belonged to the church. He had James, the brother of John, killed with the sword. After he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also (this was during the festival of Unleavened Bread). When he had seized him, he put him in prison and handed him over to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending to bring him out to the people after the Passover. While Peter was kept in prison, the church prayed fervently to God for him.

The very night before Herod was going to bring him out, Peter, bound with two chains, was sleeping between two soldiers, while guards in front of the door were keeping watch over the prison. Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He tapped Peter on the side and woke him, saying, 'Get up quickly,'

and the chains fell off his wrists. The angel said to him, 'Fasten your belt and put on your sandals.' He did so. Then he said to him, 'Wrap your cloak around you and follow me.' Peter went out and followed him; he did not realise that what was happening with the angel's help was real; he thought he was seeing a vision. After they had passed the first and the second guard, they came before the iron gate leading into the city. It opened for them of its own accord, and they went outside and walked along a lane, when suddenly the angel left him.

Acts 12:1-11

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

HYMN 2 I dream of a Church

(the song starts after 48 seconds)

Gospel reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew

All Glory to you O Lord.

When Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, 'Who do people say that the Son of Man is?' And they said, 'Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.' And Jesus answered him, 'Blessèd are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.

'I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.'

Matthew 16:13-19

This is the Gospel of the Lord

All Praise to you O Christ.

Sermon

Let's start with a true story. Sir John Betjeman was a much-loved poet. He had a great gift for writing verse but a terrible memory. One day, in the late 1940s, he was in *Selfridges* in London and saw a lady he recognised. He knew that he recognised her but simply could not remember who she was—her name, her role or job—in fact, anything. He approached her and struck up a conversation, all the while trying to hide the way he couldn't remember who she was and probably hoping he would eventually remember. Finally he asked her, 'And your husband? What is he doing now?' to which the lady replied, 'My husband? Ah! He is still king!'

This story is a perfect metaphor for the Church. All too often, we recognise bits and remember that we once knew but we forget what it's *really* about.

As we ask Jesus what his Church should be like, straightaway we notice something rather odd: Jesus mentions the Kingdom 198 times in the Gospels. His whole mission was to bring the Kingdom. He taught us to pray, 'Your Kingdom come on earth, as it is in Heaven.' That phrase defines Christianity. *But Jesus did not talk about the Church.* Jesus only uses the word 'Church' twice in the Gospels: when dealing with sin in Matthew 18:15 and here in Matthew 16, where Jesus says, 'You are Peter, the rock, and on you I will build my Church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it'. Something is going on.

And before we go further, Jesus cannot be founding a denomination or group because without a doubt he believed the world would end shortly after his death. It also means that he was not setting up Peter as any kind of Church leader. Shortly, there would be nothing to lead. It therefore makes sense to look at what Jesus says about the Church he came to build. Then, hopefully, we'll adapt our lives until we please him.

Straightaway we notice something rather odd. The word that Jesus used, and that we translate as 'Church', means neither a building nor a congregation. The word is *ecclesia* ('Ekk-lay-see-ah') from which we get English words like 'ecclesiastical'. How should we read it?

Firstly, the *ecclesia* was a military group who were 'called out' (hence the 'ek' bit') Most commonly, it comprised soldiers who are armed, triggered, and waiting to exit their comfort zone for action. The context implies the true Church is likewise a group of people called out from some kind of comfort zone.

In our Gospel story, Jesus himself is out of his own comfort zone: for example, the name of the place is Greek, therefore gentile and prohibited. He's just come away from God's presence (the story follows straight after the Transfiguration). Jesus asks the

people of all true Churches to leave their comfort zones. A true Church cannot be a Church resting in a safe place.

Secondly, all too often, we fail to notice the end of the verse from Matthew's Gospel because its implications are too mind blowing. The true Church calls people out of their comfort zones *with the express intention of fighting evil*. We'll become the sort of group against which even the gates of hell cannot prevail. One definition of 'hell' is 'being without God' so the task of the Church is to bring the Kingdom into places where God is yet Lord. That's why the true Church always fights against hunger, poverty, injustice, the arms trade, and why the true Church is active in promoting peace. The true church will oppose evil and, being the *true* Church, the evil cannot stand against it because God is with it.

I suggest a **third** aspect to being the true Church. God calls all of us out of our comfort zones. He's therefore calling us to move into new spiritualities, better ways of being a Christian. We are called to grow. This growth usually involves internal changes so profound that the old us will die and a new self takes its place.

Jesus did not come to build a Church but to build the Kingdom. The true Church is therefore never an end in itself but always a means to that end. Jesus therefore says to those wanting to be a part of that true Church, 'You are my people and on you I will build my Church. And the gates of hell will not prevail against it.' Are we?

Prayers of intercession

Encouraged by our fellowship with all the saints,
let us make our prayers to the Father through our Lord Jesus Christ.
Father, your Son called men and women to leave the past behind
them and to follow him as his disciples in the way of the cross.
Look with mercy upon those whom he calls today, marks with the cross
and makes his disciples within the Church ...
Lord, have mercy.

All Christ, have mercy.

Your Son told his disciples not to be afraid and at Easter breathed on
them his gift of peace. Look with mercy upon the world into which
he sent them out, and give it that peace for which it longs ...
Lord, have mercy.

All Christ, have mercy.

Your Son formed around him a company who were no longer servants but friends, and he called all those who obeyed him his brother and sister and mother. Look with mercy upon our families and our friends and upon the communities in which we share ...

Lord, have mercy.

All Christ, have mercy.

Your Son sent out disciples to preach and heal the sick. Look with mercy on all those who yearn to hear the good news of salvation, and renew among your people the gifts of healing ...

Lord, have mercy.

All Christ, have mercy.

Your Son promised to those who followed him that they would sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel and would share the banquet of the kingdom. According to your promise, look with mercy on those who have walked with Christ in this life and now have passed through death ...

Lord, have mercy.

All Christ, have mercy.

Almighty God,
you have built your Church upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets,
with Jesus Christ himself as the chief cornerstone:
so join us together in unity of spirit by their doctrine,
that we may be made a holy temple acceptable to you;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen.

Merciful Father,

**All Accept these prayers
for the sake of your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen.**

The peace

We are fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God, through Christ our Lord, who came and preached peace to those who were far off and those who were near.

Ephesians 2.19,17

The peace of the Lord be always with you:

All And also with you.

The liturgy of the Communion Service appears below

HYMN 3 Father in Heaven
Father in Heaven
Father in Heaven

(Enya version)
(Wellspring version)
(instrumental version)

The Dismissal

God, who has prepared for you a city with eternal foundations,
bring you, with Peter and Paul and all the saints,
to the eternal and triumphant joy of that city;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always.

All Amen

HYMN4 What wondrous love is this (please click on this link to hear the hymn)

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

All In the name of Christ.
Amen.

The Liturgy of the Sacrament

Eucharistic Prayer (prayer E)

The Lord be with you

All and also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

All We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

All It is right to give thanks and praise.

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy
that we should always sing of your glory,
holy Father, almighty and eternal God,
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord.
For you are the hope of the nations,
the builder of the city that is to come.
Your love made visible in Jesus Christ
brings home the lost,
restores the sinner and gives dignity to the despised.
In his face your light shines out,
flooding lives with goodness and truth,
gathering into one in your kingdom
a divided and broken humanity.
Therefore with all who can give voice in your creation
we glorify your name,
for ever praising you and saying,

**All Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

We praise and bless you, loving Father,
through Jesus Christ, our Lord;
and as we obey his command,
send your Holy Spirit,
that broken bread and wine outpoured
may be for us the body and blood of your dear Son.

On the night before he died he had supper with his friends
and, taking bread, he praised you.
He broke the bread, gave it to them and said:
Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you;
do this in remembrance of me.

When supper was ended he took the cup of wine.
Again he praised you, gave it to them and said:
Drink this, all of you;
this is my blood of the new covenant,
which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.

So, Father, we remember all that Jesus did,
in him we plead with confidence his sacrifice made once for all upon the cross.

Bringing before you the bread of life and cup of salvation,
we proclaim his death and resurrection
until he comes in glory.

Great is the mystery of faith:

All Christ has died.
Christ is risen.
Christ will come again.

Lord of all life,
help us to work together for that day
when your kingdom comes
and justice and mercy will be seen in all the earth.

Look with favour on your people,
gather us in your loving arms
and bring us with Saints Peter and Paul, and all the saints
to feast at your table in heaven.

Through Christ, and with Christ, and in Christ,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all honour and glory are yours, O loving Father,
for ever and ever.

All Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

**All Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever.
Amen.**

Breaking of the Bread

We break this bread to share in the body of Christ.

**All Though we are many, we are one body,
because we all share in one bread.**

All **Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
have mercy on us.
Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
have mercy on us.
Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
grant us peace.**

Draw near with faith.
Receive the body of our Lord Jesus Christ
which he gave for you,
and his blood which he shed for you.
Eat and drink
in remembrance that he died for you,
and feed on him in your hearts
by faith with thanksgiving.

All **We do not presume
to come to this your table, merciful Lord,
trusting in our own righteousness,
but in your manifold and great mercies.
We are not worthy
so much as to gather up the crumbs under your table.
But you are the same Lord
whose nature is always to have mercy.
Grant us therefore, gracious Lord,
so to eat the flesh of your dear Son Jesus Christ
and to drink his blood,
that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body
and our souls washed through his most precious blood,
and that we may evermore dwell in him,
and he in us.
Amen.**

Communion is distributed.

Prayer after Communion

Almighty God,
who on the day of Pentecost
sent your Holy Spirit to the apostles
with the wind from heaven and in tongues of flame,
filling them with joy and boldness to preach the gospel:
by the power of the same Spirit
strengthen us to witness to your truth
and to draw everyone to the fire of your love;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen

**All Almighty God,
we thank you for feeding us
with the body and blood of your Son Jesus Christ.
Through him we offer you our souls and bodies
to be a living sacrifice.
Send us out
in the power of your Spirit
to live and work
to your praise and glory.
Amen.**