

HOMILY FROM THE HERMITAGE

CORONA 30

SS PETER AND PAUL

(this is the last in the series and so has a quite light tone)

The Feast of Peter and Paul normally June 29th is year transferred to 28th the Sunday.

These two saints are the main pillars of the early Church: St. Peter the first leader of the group was designated by Jesus: 'You are Peter and on this rock I shall build My Church.' He became the first bishop of Rome. St. Paul, called dramatically by Jesus on the road to Damascus, was designated as the first apostle to the Gentiles—the wide world.

When they were young they would have never imagined that these works would be theirs, probably never have thought that they would end up in Rome. Peter, son of John, would be a fisherman in Galilee, we would have called him 'Simon Johnson': Paul was to be a tent/sail maker, a craftsman at Tarsus. He was a Pharisee, and a man of some learning: in addition we think that he was a Roman citizen, possibly because the Romans designated Tarsus as 'a free city', or for family reasons (certainly he pulled rank at this trial and was the privilege of being beheaded: Roman citizens could not be crucified nor given to bitely beasts.)

Both were truly human, loving and yet fallible:

Peter: great expression and emotions of love: active and eager: believed Jesus the Christ: humble and penitent: but weak, noisy, a braggart and a coward: not always consistent but intensely loving of Jesus and loved by Jesus.

Paul: learned, Pharisee (and therefore amenable to Jesus' Resurrection): great-hearted: tireless in preaching the Gospel: greatly loving and much loved: intensely faithful to Jesus; wise and hard-working: fearless to the end in Rome: but difficult to work with: could quarrel: talk at great length: inclined to boast: but faithful to the end. Neither achieved his faith and conversion by his own merits nor prevented by his faults. Jesus said to Peter: 'It is not flesh and blood that was revealed to you but my Father in heaven' Matt: 16/17. At Paul's conversion Jesus said 'I am Jesus' Acts 9/5. Both were inspired by the Holy Spirit.

None of us knows what the Lord will ask of us and we need to be open to His Spirit and be able to change and follow the Spirit. Peter and Paul, olim Simon and Saul, were ordinary men who their virtues and their faults: we are likewise. This doesn't matter: what does matter is that we accept whatever God wishes us to do in our lives and be willing, warts and all, to do our best to follow His Will. Peter first leader: Paul the great missionary: pray for us that we may follow as Jesus says finally to Peter in John 21: 'You follow me'

(This thought completes the series which start by following though Lent to Holy Week to Easter to Pentecost and thereafter. I hope that this is help someone somewhere. I should like to thank Eileen, Vicar of Scarisbrick, for all her support and for many of the thoughts in these documents during Lent and Easter. Meanwhile, sleep peacefully in the Lord.)