

THE BENEFICE OF MALPAS, THREAPWOOD AND BICKERTON

Sunday 28th June 2020

In celebration of the Feast of Saints PETER and PAUL, Apostles



Greeting

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with you

Welcome

Prayers of Penitence

Let us confess our sins to God,
as we say together:

All: Lord God,

we have sinned against you;

we have done evil in your sight.

We are sorry and repent.

Have mercy on us according to your love.

Wash away our wrongdoing and cleanse us from our sin.

Renew a right spirit within us

and restore us to the joy of your salvation,

through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

May almighty God, who sent his Son into the world to save sinners, bring you his pardon and peace, now and for ever. **Amen.**

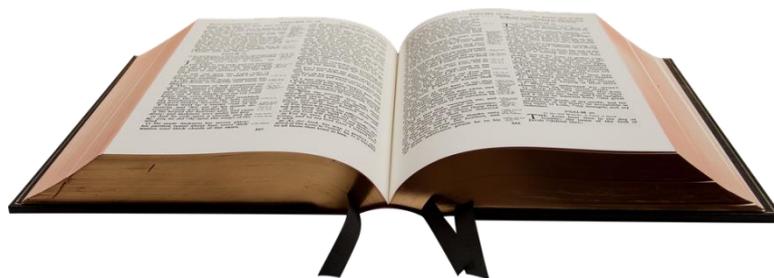
The Collect

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.

Bible Reading: Matthew 16:13-19

¹³ Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, 'Who do people say that the Son of Man is?' ¹⁴And they said, 'Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' ¹⁵He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' ¹⁶Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.' ¹⁷And Jesus answered him, 'Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. ¹⁸And 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. ¹⁹I 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.'

This is the Word of the Lord
Thanks be to God



Homily by the Revd Canon Peter Lee

In the name of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen

It was a privilege and a joy for me to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of when I was Ordained Priest on Trinity Sunday. Ordinations usually follow what are known as Ember Days and in this Diocese they now usually fall near St. Peter and St. Paul whom we commemorate today. Sadly, of course, this year that will not be possible because of coronavirus. Those due to be ordained Deacon and Priest will have to wait. It seems appropriate however to link our thoughts today, as we celebrate these 2 saints who did so much to establish the church they were commissioned by Christ to build, with the ministry belonging to, and passed on by, the Church.

That commission, of course, was recounted in our Gospel reading. Jesus said to Peter, 'you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church.' What was the rock on which Jesus would build his Church? Surely not impetuous Peter who would blurt out his undying support only to deny Jesus. Surely not Paul who could be very abrasive, would not give John Mark a second chance and was scarcely a pioneer for women's lib. Surely not Peter and Paul together who were chalk and cheese with clashing personalities. No. Jesus' declaration of Peter as the rock immediately follows his confession of Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God, and that is the rock on which the Church is built. It is Peter's recognition or revelation that this itinerant popular teacher was the promised Messiah – the Son of the living God - that is the firm, and only, foundation on which the Church could be built and that is as true today as when Jesus first declared it. It is the confession of Jesus as the revelation of God in human life; it is the insight that the life and teaching and character of Jesus of Nazareth is both microscope and telescope into the character and workings of the creator of the universe and that it is by following that life and teaching that our life takes shape and meaning and purpose. Once the penny had dropped for Peter that revelation could be the start of all future ministry whereby the Church can share and proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord.

But Jesus not only proclaims Peter as the rock on which the Church will be built, he goes on to promise 'I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven.' And so both now as then the confession of Jesus as the Christ provides the key for ministry. To recognise Jesus as God incarnate is to accept and welcome the counter intuitive paradox that he came not to be served but to serve; that it is in giving that we receive; that it is in losing life that we find it; and that in dying we are born to eternal life. And that, in turn, gives us, as the Church, the keys to the kingdom of God. The task of ministry in the Church, both for the Church as a whole and for individual ministers of the Church, is to use those keys to open the Kingdom for those at present locked outside. And that can only be done when the individuals of the Church become the Body of Christ and work in harmony for the vision of the Kingdom.

To do that, of course, we have to proclaim our faith in Jesus as the Christ and teach the Word of God which will give people the key to understanding. But that will mean nothing unless our ministry of word is acted out in deed. We need to remember the Parable Jesus told of the sheep and the goats. They asked 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and fed you, or thirsty and gave you drink, a stranger and took you home, or naked and clothed you? When did we see you ill or in prison and came to visit you?' and the King will answer 'truly I tell you: anything you did for one of my brothers here, however insignificant, you did for me.'

The sacrificial care and compassion of people in so many different capacities through this coronavirus pandemic has in itself been a ministry which has won the hearts and gratitude of the whole community and throughout the world and set us, as the Church, an example. This sacrificial care has been a key which has unlocked the real value of life and given meaning to the enigma of existence. And so the task of ministry in the Church is to use the keys entrusted to us actively to unlock the doors that imprison people to release them into the fullness of life that God intends for them; to

feed and care and comfort those who are locked in fear or pain or grief or hunger or abuse or discrimination and to open up the promise of eternal life in God's Kingdom.

May we, recognising and confessing Jesus as Christ, rejoice in our commission to use the keys Jesus entrusted to the Church through St Peter, to release people from whatever imprisons them to enjoy the freedom of the Kingdom of God in all its fullness. Amen.

Affirmation of faith

Let us declare our faith in God:

All We believe in God the Father,
from whom every family
in heaven and on earth is named.
We believe in God the Son,
who lives in our hearts through faith,
and fills us with his love.
We believe in God the Holy Spirit,
who strengthens us
with power from on high.
We believe in one God;
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Prayers

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
and to follow him. Look with mercy upon those whom he calls today, and
strengthen us all in our walk with you.
Lord, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.

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

and friends and upon the communities in which we share.

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Your Son sent out disciples to preach and heal the sick. Look with mercy on those who suffer in body, mind or spirit and especially in this time of Coronavirus

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Your Son promised those who followed him that they would share the banquet of the kingdom. Look with mercy on those who have walked with Christ in this life and now have passed through death.

Lord, have mercy.

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 the unity of your spirit through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Being made one by the power of the Spirit, we pray together

Our Father, who art in heaven,

hallowed be thy name;

thy kingdom come;

thy will be done;

on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses,

as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation;

but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom,

the power and the glory,

for ever and ever. Amen.

Blessing

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. **Amen**