

## SS Peter and Paul the Apostles

*Such is their prominence in the Christian calendar - unlike the other apostles, Saints Peter and Paul are assigned a special feast-day all to themselves.*

In the gospel we see where Jesus made Peter Head of the Church, He and his successors were to be its focal point of unity and orthodoxy throughout history, preserving it from error. The authority which Jesus conferred on Peter, despite his sins and failings, is now invested in Pope Francis. The Pope may be infallible but he's not impeccable.

St Paul came from a different stable to Peter. We all know about his dramatic conversion, but before that he was a terror to the early church. He'd be the last person we'd have chosen to preach the Gospel to a wider world. Goes to show God's ways are not always our ways.

St Paul is without doubt the great missionary. Pope Paul VI, who was beatified not so long ago, used to say that the Church exists in order to be missionary. Sometimes, it seems to me we're more into maintenance these days than mission. That will need to change if we are to take on the growing secularization of our times which tends to make God redundant.

When Peter and Paul went to Rome and set up the Church, it was the capital of Europe and indeed the world at the time. Whether you voted Brexit or not, all I do know is that the EU has never acknowledged the great contribution the Catholic Church has made to European culture. The EU, when formulating its constitution, didn't give the Church even a mention even though it contributed massively towards European civilization which is rarely spoken about.

Since Pope Francis, the Successor of St Peter, burst on to the scene in 2013, people have been touched by his warmth, his openness, his simple life-style. He might at times forget he's Pope especially during impromptu interviews, but it shows he's human after all.

Saints Peter and Paul never tried to hide their human failures or struggles. St Peter once asked our Lord to leave him because he was a sinful man. That was after the miraculous catch of fish. He wept bitterly after disowning Jesus in the early hours of Good Friday. He may have momentarily deserted Jesus but Jesus never disowned him.

St Paul was even more candid. He said that he was merciless in persecuting the early church, doing a great deal of damage to it. He insisted he wasn't worthy to be called an apostle. He was present at the martyrdom of St Stephen and approved of it.

Despite their weaknesses, Ss Peter and Paul never left us in any doubt that it was by the grace of God, and not their own strength, which brought them success. Their love for Jesus was the inspiration for their mission which would eventually culminate in them laying down their lives for Him.

*Saints Peter and Paul, pray for us.*