

TRINITY NEWS

PENTECOST III The Apostle Peter and Paul

Today the universal church remembers the Apostles Peter and Paul. Peter may have been influenced by the Pharisees, but Paul **was** a Pharisee. Peter was a fisherman who followed Christ. He was marked by both leadership qualities and failure. He denied even knowing Jesus near the time of Jesus' arrest. Paul was a leading figure in Judaism and an intellectual, knowing both Greek and Hebrew and also Aramaic. He described himself as a "a Hebrew of the Hebrews; as to the Law a Pharisee".

Peter once fell down at the knees of Christ and cried out: "Depart from me for I am a sinful man" (Luke 5:8). The Jesus Presence came to Paul one day on the Damascus road and engaged him in a few words that changed his life. Peter was given a vision to convince him that what God had called clean could not be called unclean.

After having persecuted Christians Paul emerged as a magnificent advocate of Christianity. Paul is reported to have said that he was "the foremost of sinners" (1 Timothy 1:15). He also said that "all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Considering himself the foremost of sinners indicate a deep consciousness of his own sin as a sure perspective when looking at the sins of others. It is like Jesus' warning about taking the beam out of our own eye before noticing a speck of sin the eye of another.

Peter denied Jesus at a crucial stage before his trial, and "Saul also called Paul" persecuted Christians. Both of them were redeemed personally by Christ. Peter was a leader and Paul was a writer and preacher. Both of them were taught by the example of Jesus to make the love of God the primary passion in their life. Paul writes in Romans 5:5 that God's love has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. Those words could only be written by someone who had experienced the love of God. That Love comes to shape love in a person. Peter's redemption from failure came in a matching triple assurance after his three denials of Christ. It also carried a commission for apostolic ministry after Peter's responses to Jesus' three questions: "Simon son of John, do you love me?" It is not a question about beliefs but a question about relationships. **Love and a Question** is the title of a heart-warming poem by Robert Frost. Love is not a question, it is an answer. Love is not a need, it is a gift. Love is not ownership, it is a sacred bond; love is not a sacrifice, it is an offering. Love is not about what I want, but what I can give. Love cannot be defined, it can only be experienced. Love and doubt are opposites. "God is love" says John who was entranced by God's love. The Beloved Disciple is at the Cross with the mother of Jesus. The circle of love between Jesus and his mother and the Beloved Disciple at the Cross brings son and mother and a beloved friend together. It is so in life in relationships right now.

Paul's perception of his own sin caused him to invoke its most effective antidote, the love of God. It also balanced his fierce views on the failures of others. Peter's failures tormented him and Jesus looked for him one day to restore him. Failing Christ troubled both of them. Loving God in Christ restored them and left them free to exercise their multiple gifts for all of us.

Bishop Arthur Jones

THIS WEEK:

July 2, Wednesday.

- Bible Study, 10:00am
- Discussion Group, 7:30pm,
Parish Office.

July 3, Thursday.

- Midweek Eucharist, 10:00am,
Chapel
-

**NEXT WEEK'S
READINGS:**

Zechariah 9:9-12

Psalm 145

Romans 7:21-8:6

Matthew 11:25-30