

Molweni dear family and friends of False Bay Diocese,

Scripture: John 21:15-19      Hymn: *Rock of ages, cleft for me*

We have received the gift of a new day and a new week from the hand of God. Every day is a gift to begin again, to grasp with both hands the opportunity to learn, unlearn and relearn.

Today we celebrate the solemnity of two glorious apostles of Christ, two pillars of the church: Peter and Paul. They were different in character and personality, but united in their love for Christ and the Church. The one the Lord appointed the chief shepherd of his flock, the rock foundation of the Church and the bearer of the keys of the Kingdom; the other was the Lord's chosen vessel to bear His name before Gentiles, kings and the children of Israel. Both were present and active in Rome, and both wore the crown of martyrdom around the year 67, under Emperor Nero.

In the gospels, wherever the names of the Apostles are listed, Peter heads the list. He often spoke to Jesus on behalf of the twelve.

Simon Peter of Bethsaida was a fisherman. His brother Andrew brought him to Jesus, and both were later called to be fishers of people. It was Jesus who named him Peter and appointed him the rock foundation of the Church. Having heard various opinions about himself, Jesus asked the Disciples, *"Who do you say that I am?"* It was Peter who answered, *"You are the Christ, Son of the living God."* Jesus congratulated him for having learnt this truth not by human means but by divine revelation. The Lord added, *"And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it."* Then he entrusted the keys of the Kingdom of heaven to Peter and gave him the power of binding and loosing (Read Matthew 16:13-19; and Paragraph 45 on pg. 592 of An Anglican Prayer Book)

What about us today? Who do you say that Jesus is in this time of Covid-19. Some are losing their courage in these unexpected times and we need to speak to Jesus on their behalf. You are the rock on which Jesus is building his church. We continue to be the church at home for the world. But rather this than our churches becoming sites of infection and death in the peak of the Coronavirus. Tough times call for tough action. We keep each other in prayer as we continue to pray for the whole situation. The President of Mozambique has extended the lockdown until end of July. My dear clergy and people, our function is to be a source of stability in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic as also the Gender Based Violence pandemic. We are all interconnected. When one hurts, we all hurt. We continue to seek God's intervention.

Jesus says *"Simon, Simon ... I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail, and when you have turned again, strengthen your brethren."* (Luke 22:31-32). Now, put your name in the place of the name of Simon and hear the Lord saying your name and praying for you by name *"that your faith may not fail, and when you have turned again, strengthen your sisters and brothers."*

Paul of Tarsus (in Southern Asia Minor) was brought up as a strict Pharisee. He was present at the martyrdom of Stephen in Jerusalem, and he consented to his murder. He heard Stephen praying for his murderers, and that prayer was answered. Shortly after that, as he was going to Damascus to throw the Christians there into prison, he had a blinding vision of the Risen Christ, and that changed him from a persecutor of the Christians into their outstanding leader.

Like with Peter and Paul, we are either faced with a storm of enthusiasm or one of opposition. We are suffering the storm of Covid-19. Remember that we are all in the same storm but not in the same boat. In Paul's boat was that he suffered imprisonment, stoning, flogging, ship-wreck, illness and other hardships, but on he went and on we must go.

Paul was a firebrand. On fire for the Messiah. He was convinced and he proclaimed without the slightest hesitation that he was chosen and commissioned by Christ to be an apostle. St Paul was many things: preacher, pastor, theologian and founder of the Churches. He wrote: *"my teaching and message were not delivered with skilful words of human wisdom, but with convincing proof of the power of God's Spirit."* (1 Cor 2:4).

We, Christ's faithful followers today, should capture the spirit and zeal of the Apostles Peter and Paul and what marvels we could do for God and God's people. Like Peter and Paul, are we ready to die to ourselves, to our selfishness, ego and ambition that Christ may live in us? Only the branches living in communion with the vine tree can produce grapes. As we celebrate the Feast Day of Peter and Paul, let us love their faith, their life, their trials, their passion, their profession, and their teaching.

Today, please **reach out** to any person you know bearing the name Peter or Paul, as also to clergy and members of our churches dedicated to St Peter or to St Paul.

**In our prayers** today we bring before God our Creator the need to base our **outer lives** on our **inner relationship** with him. Listen to God's guidance, make frequent prayerful references to God during our ordinary daily round. Christ comes to us in many guises: the refugee, the destitute, drug addicts, the sick, the paramedics, taxi bosses, restaurant owners, politicians. Jesus is in our homes, in our workplace, in our schools, in our Parishes. Ask Jesus advice in the difficult situation you are facing. Acknowledge his presence as he longs to share your life with you. Lord graciously hear us.

I am, Because We Are, Because God is.....Opening hearts to heal God's world. *Wherever we are, God is.*