

Morning Worship for St Peter and St Paul

Preparation

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts:
the whole earth is full of his glory.

Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength;
ascribe to the Lord the honour due to his name.

The whole earth is full of his glory.

The Lord shall give strength to his people;

the Lord shall give his people the blessing of peace.

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts:

the whole earth is full of his glory.

Opening Prayer

Holy God,

faithful and unchanging:

**enlarge our minds with the knowledge of your truth,
and draw us more deeply into the mystery of your love,**

that we may truly worship you,

Father, Son and Holy Spirit,

one God, now and for ever.

Amen.

Cast your burden upon the Lord:

And he will sustain you.

Create in us clean hearts O God:

And renew a right spirit within us.

Cast us not away from your presence:

And take not your Holy Spirit from us.

Give us the joy of your saving help:

And sustain us with your life-giving Spirit.

Blessed be the Lord day by day:

The God of our salvation who bears our burdens.

We confess our sins.

God the Father forgives us in Christ

and heals us by the Holy Spirit.

Let us therefore put away all anger and bitterness,

all slander and malice,

and confess our sins to God our redeemer.

(cf Ephesians 4.30,32)

Come, let us return to the Lord and say:

Lord our God,

in our sin we have avoided your call.

**Our love for you is like a morning cloud,
like the dew that goes away early.**

Have mercy on us;

deliver us from judgement;

bind up our wounds and revive us;

in 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.**

Praise

O Lord, open our lips:

And our mouth shall proclaim your praise.

Let us worship the Lord:

All praise to his name.

Gloria in Excelsis

Glory to God in the highest,

and peace to his people on earth.

Lord God, heavenly King,

almighty God and Father,

we worship you, we give you thanks,

we praise you for your glory.

Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,

Lord God, Lamb of God,

you take away the sin of the world:

have mercy on us;

you are seated at the right hand of the Father:

receive our prayer.

For you alone are the Holy One,

you alone are the Lord,

you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,

with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

The word of God

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

About that time King Herod laid violent hands upon some who belonged to the church. He had James, the brother of John, killed with the sword. After he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. (This was during the festival of Unleavened Bread.) When he had seized him, he put him in prison and handed him over to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending to bring him out to the people after the Passover. While Peter was kept in prison, the church prayed fervently to God for him. The very night before Herod was going to bring him out, Peter, bound with two chains, was sleeping between two soldiers, while guards in front of the door were keeping watch over the prison. Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He tapped Peter on the side and woke him, saying, 'Get up quickly.' And the chains fell off his wrists. The angel said to him, 'Fasten your belt and put on your sandals.' He did so. Then he said to him, 'Wrap your cloak around you and follow me.' Peter went out and followed him; he did not realize that what was happening with the angel's help was real; he thought he was seeing a vision. After they had passed the first and the second guard, they came before the iron gate leading into the city. It opened for them of its own accord, and they went outside and walked along a lane, when suddenly the angel left him. Then Peter came to himself and said, 'Now I am sure that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from the hands of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting.' (Acts 12:1–11)

This is the word of the Lord; *thanks be to God*

Hear the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew.

When Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, 'Who do people say that the Son of Man is?' And they said, 'Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.' And 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. And 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. I 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.' (Matthew 16:13–19)

This is the Gospel of the Lord; *Praise to you O Christ*

A reflection by Revd Joy Cousans, Vicar of Eaton Bray with Edlesborough

Today we celebrate St Peter and St Paul two giants of the early Christian church. They came from contrasting backgrounds and are as different as chalk & cheese. The fact that they were both instrumental in shaping the early church demonstrates that Jesus calls people to follow him from every part of society.

St Paul started life as Saul, a righteous Jew who was raised as a Pharisee. He changed his name to Paul at his conversion to Christianity. Saul was born in Tarsus, which is in modern southeast Turkey. When Saul lived there, it was the capital city of Cilicia in Asia Minor. His father was a rich and influential man of the tribe of Benjamin. By virtue of his birth Saul was not only a Jew but also a Roman citizen. As he grew up, Saul learnt the Cilician art of cloth making, which provided him with a trade during his ministry. Saul later went to Jerusalem to study under the Pharisee, Gamaliel. He was steeped in the Jewish law and traditions and in his writings you can still detect that legal training and that passionate belief in the cause.

Peter was equally passionate, but he was from a much humbler background. He was born Simon in Bethsaida in Galilee where he grew up and joined the family business. He was a fisherman sharing his boat with his brother, Andrew and Zebedee's sons James and John. When Jesus called Simon, he recognised his potential and gave him the new name of Peter or 'Rock' for Jesus said 'On this rock I will build my church'. 'Petros' is the Greek for rock, hence the name Peter. Peter spent 3 years with Jesus, learning from him as his disciple.

After the Ascension, Peter was prominent in the Councils of the Apostles and in building up the growing church in Jerusalem. The first miracle of healing after Jesus' ascension occurred at the Beautiful Gate when Peter cured a lame beggar who asked for alms. The church in Jerusalem was persecuted and Stephen was stoned. Paul stood by and approved the stoning whilst Peter continued in Jerusalem to nurture the church. Peter exercised authority in the Christian community in Jerusalem, publically preaching at Pentecost and on subsequent occasions. He was imprisoned for his faith and an angel miraculously rescued him from prison as we heard in our reading from Acts. He also undertook missionary journeys to Judea and Syria. He is the only one of the twelve apostles to have a wife mentioned in the Bible and it is thought that she accompanied him on his journeys.

When Paul joined the Jerusalem church, they were naturally suspicious of him as one who had previously persecuted Christians. He and Peter had a difference of opinion about the conversion of the Gentiles and, according to Acts, Peter was given a vision from God to persuade him that Gentiles should be admitted to the church. Paul spent much of his ministry travelling the world and converting the Gentiles to Christianity. He was a powerful advocate of the idea that the Gospel was for all people, whatever their age, gender, race, colour or social standing.

Paul was a prolific letter writer and sent epistles to the churches he had established to encourage, rebuke and teach the congregations. Some of them we still have as part of the New Testament. Peter also wrote two letters which are in the New Testament and are addressed to a wide circle of believers. They were sent to encourage his readers to remain strong in the face of persecution.

Between them, Peter and Paul were responsible for the growth and change of the early church from a small Jewish sect to a religion which spread throughout the known world. Their desire to make disciples of all people is an example to the Christian church down the ages. Today we remember them and give thanks for the life and witness of both Peter and Paul. We are reminded that the good news of Jesus is for everyone, whatever their background, race, or social standing. Amen.

Our faith

Let us declare our faith in God Father, Son and Holy Spirit

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.**

**On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,**

**the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

Prayers of Intercession led by Dave Cousans

God of ages past we give thanks for the rich and varied Christian faith that we can draw on in our own times. For the lives of people of faith who have built your Church through the centuries and who have trod the path that we walk and illuminated so many aspects of the Christian journey. We think this month of our own diocesan saint St. Alban and his selfless sacrifice of his own life for a fellow Christian brother. We remember those less exalted who nevertheless through perseverance and quiet determination built the places of worship that cover our land and carried the Christian flame through good times and bad through the constancy of their devotion. Mould us we pray in that spirit of resilience in these times of uncertainty for us and your Church. Help us to seize and embrace the opportunities that doing 'Church' differently may present us with. We pray especially for all Archbishops, Bishops and clergy and all who have leadership roles in the Church that they would be guided by your spirit in plotting the future path of Christ's Church in this diocese and worldwide.

Lord in Your Mercy; **Hear our Prayer**

We lift before you Lord the leaders of this country and of all the nations of this world. Imbue them with righteousness, clarity of thought and purpose. May they govern wisely and appropriately. We think of the challenges that they individually and collectively face today; the response to Coronavirus and its economic and social impacts, the need to respond to the claims of racial injustice and marginalisation and for some the need to find food and clean water for their people. Heavenly Father, we pray that all leaders would be convicted by your spirit of their duty to all their people. To govern with tolerance and humility and to pursue those policies that deliver the common good.

Lord in Your Mercy; **Hear our Prayer**

Gracious Father we give thanks for the world that you have made for the creative energy which inspired, developed and nurtured it. We confess that our own stewardship of it is often less than perfect and that we squander and waste resources. We pray for those who seek to protect our environment and develop imaginative and technological solutions to reduce our carbon footprint and impact on the planet. We ask that they would receive the funding and support from both the

public and private sectors to develop ideas into workable solutions. Help us we pray, to play our part and make us ever more conscious about our own lifestyle choices and the impacts they have.
Lord in Your Mercy; **Hear our Prayer**

Lord of life who cared deeply for those who suffered and healed those who cried out in their distress, hear us we pray when we lift before you those known to us in need at this time. Heavenly Father, gather in your arms all who suffer at this time in body, mind or spirit. May your love and reassurance surround and envelop those who are in despair, pain and anguish. Strengthen those who care for those who are sick and give them your compassion and understanding.
Lord in Your Mercy; **Hear our Prayer**

We remember those who have passed from this earthly life and whom we see no more. We think of those who have been recently bereaved and where the opportunity to say a final farewell may have been reduced or curtailed. We thank God for the lives of those written in our Book of Remembrance for this week.
Lord of life and love,
as we give thanks for times past,
grant us courage to embrace the present
and grace to share the future.
In memory of loved ones dear,
kindle their flame to shine in the dark
and light the path ahead.
Show the way that leads to life
as we cherish days gone by
and inspire us with the touch of love
that faith and hope live on.

Lord in Your Mercy; **Hear our Prayer**

Finally, we pray for ourselves:
O Lord Jesus Christ - stay beside me to defend me,
within me to guide me - before me to lead me,
behind me to guard me - and above me to bless me;
that with you and in you,
I may live and move and have my being,
for ever and ever,
Merciful Father, **accept these prayers for the sake of your son, our saviour Jesus Christ. Amen**

A prayer for the coronavirus pandemic
Keep us, good Lord,
under the shadow of your mercy
in this time of uncertainty and distress.
Sustain and support the anxious and fearful,
and lift up all who are brought low;
that we may rejoice in your comfort
knowing that nothing can separate us from your love
in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

We join together with Christians throughout the world in the prayer that Jesus taught us.
**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.**

Conclusion

The Collect for the day

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. Amen.

You are worthy, our Lord and God,
to receive glory and honour and power.
For you have created all things,
and by your will they have their being.
You are worthy, O Lamb, for you were slain,
and by your blood you ransomed us for God.
From every tribe and language and nation,
**you have made us to be a kingdom and priests
serving our God.**

To the One who sits on the throne and to the Lamb
**be blessing and honour and glory and might
for ever and ever. Amen.** (*Revelation 4.11;5.9b,10,11*)

We end with the words of the Grace, an ancient Christian prayer of fellowship, remembering that although we are not together in person, nothing can separate us from the love of God found in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ
and the love of God
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with us all evermore. Amen.**

*Please let us know if you want us to pray for you either individually or if you would like to be included on the Prayer Chain.
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Reverend Joy Cousans; Reverend Stephen Burge

