

In the Christian Calendar June is a positive feast of feast days: St Alban, considered by many as the true patron of England; John the Baptist, who is awarded two significant feast days every year; St Barnabas, one of the fairly quiet Apostles; St Romuald, the great Benedictine reformer at the end of the first millennia, (my own champion and patron); two significant Māori prophets of the early days of the European colonisation of Aotearoa, Wiremu Tamihana and Hanare Wiremu Taratoa; St Thomas More, who had the courage to stand up to Henry VIII; and many more. And then there is our own St Peter, Patron of the Parish.

If there is anything I find in common with all these people, it is that they were fighters for their God and the truth, fighting the cause of their individual ministries. None of them were beyond standing against secular issues of the day, even the most powerful of monarchs. St Peter, the denier, (why do we never give him the same bad press that St Thomas was unjustifiably labelled with), who became the first bishop of Rome, and who to his dying day argued with his fellow Apostles and didn't get on too well with many of his contemporaries, but who became the predicted rock prescribed by Jesus. A simple fisherman who never expected to end up leader of much of the early Church.

In the parish church there is a symbol of an upside-down cross in the middle of a pair of crossed keys replaced by a sword. I do not know if this story also goes for St Peter's PN, but in another place an explanation for the same symbol is that some consider it blasphemous to portray the cross of Christ upside-down. The simple fact is that St Peter, crucified in Rome, (supposedly where there is now a huge monolith in front of St Peter's Basilica), refused to be put to death in the same manner as his Saviour. True or false, it makes for a good story.

In the stories of each of the Saints mentioned there is a theme of non-violence, indeed of anti-violence, (even though Peter was known for his temper and anger), and we could, in these present times, take sincere note of that. I am drawn to two great prophets of the last century: "Mahatma Gandhi's principle of non-violence and Sri Ramakrishna's testimony to the harmony of religions: here we have the attitude and the spirit that can make it possible for the human race to grow together into a single family - and in the atomic age, this is the only alternative to destroying ourselves." The words of Arnold Toynbee.

When we as a parish meet with our brothers and sisters of the local Roman Catholic parishes, whether in our own church or at the Cathedral, we do well to reflect on these words, and what it means, as our Vicar has taught us, to live in the grace of hospitality, to fully understand what that term means, to live it out, beyond the church doors, *and* within our own houses of God. "My Father's house has many mansions", but at the end of the day it is one universal Church.

Look to the prophets of our day. They may not live saintly lives. They may, like our Patron, St Peter, be grumpy old men, and women, (let's not be sexist on this subject),

as well as the young who dream dreams of a world full of peace and good-will. The thing to do - and there is a great Benedictine tradition here - is to listen. Listen and learn. If only politicians would do that. But maybe I will leave that side of the coin for another day.

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