

## ST PETER'S DAY 2019 – 8am Eucharist

One of the most famous churches in Britain, if not in the world, must be St. Martin's in the Field in Trafalgar Square. On the one hand, it is renowned for its Academy and for the quality of its music, yet on the other hand it is famous for the ministry it has to tramps, drug-addicts and down-and-outs. Two contrasting claims to fame!

One of its well-known vicars was Canon Austen Williams, who was himself a character of contrasts. He was said to be distant, yet warm and personal; assured yet self-doubting; shy yet a showman; laid-back yet driven, sophisticated yet simple; an establishment figure yet deeply suspicious of institutional life.

So, it's not surprising, perhaps, that he once wrote a prayer entitled "I am two people"

*I am two people  
One is longing to serve you utterly  
And one is afraid.  
O Lord have compassion on me.*

*I am two people  
One will labour to the end  
And one is weary already.  
O Lord have compassion on me.*

*I am two people  
One knows the suffering of the world  
And one knows only its own.  
O Lord have compassion on me.*

And many of us can identify with that. We are a bundle of paradoxes. And St. Peter too was a mixture, a bundle of paradoxes. He had his moments of greatness but also his moments of weakness. One day, as in today's Gospel, courageously proclaiming Jesus as "The Messiah, the Son of God", yet cowardly at another time, shouting out in fear, "I do not know the man!" Fortright about his loyalty to Jesus, yet when the soldiers came, running off. Fearless and high-principled in going to the house of the Gentile Cornelius and baptising him, yet at other times refusing to eat with Gentiles for fear of the strictures of the his conservative co-religionists. Peter had his highs and his lows, he had his light side and his dark side.

He too could have prayed, "I am two people." But through it all Jesus loved him and believed in him and would not let him go.

And which of us haven't had high and low moments, times when we have been incredibly strong and then times when we have been weak? Times when we have, as it were scaled mountains, only at other times to trip over something small?

And, like for Peter, so for us, Jesus continues to love us and believe in us and won't let us go.

One preacher has put it like this:- "We must not let our low moments get us down, and we must draw encouragement from our high moments. While we must not forget our weak side, we must try to act out of our strong side. The Lord smiles on us in our good moments, and upholds us in our low moments."

Peter's story is our story. We all live with a certain amount of paradox in our characters. Yes, we are mixtures and the Christian life is full of paradoxes. But it gives us permission to not have to be strong all of the time. When we feel weak Christ is with us and calls us to rely on his strength. There is one immovable foundation and that is God's individual and personal love for each of us, a love that will never forsake us or leave us and that will be ours to the end of time.