

## Some like them, some don't

The Redemptorist monastery and church in Perth is named after Saints Peter and Paul and in the sanctuary of the church there are murals depicting events in their lives.

Over the years, these paintings have become well known, and like many works of art, some like them and some don't. This was also true of Peter and Paul in their lifetime. Some liked them, some didn't. The emperor Nero certainly did not like them and used the great fire of Rome as his excuse to have them, and many other believers, executed.

How did it happen that these two men came under the influence of Jesus and were convinced to act as spreaders of his word and why? They were both Jewish. They come over as strong characters; one a fisherman, the other a tentmaker.

Peter reminds me of a well known cardinal in the USA who was fondly known by his priests as "Ready! FIRE! Aim!" because of his tendency to act, then think. Peter was impetuous; he acted and thought about it later. The description of his call is very simple; he put aside his nets and followed Jesus.

Paul was "ultra" Jewish. His problem was one of trying to understand how these upstart followers of Jesus could be so upsetting of public order and especially the religious element of that order. His solution was persecution, the result was his conversion. He too was a fiery character, proud of his ability to look after himself and protective of that independence. He could not work with everyone and seems to have been a very determined character. He was so enthusiastic in his work that he often stirred strong debate. Sometimes believers heaved a sigh of relief when he moved on. Like Peter, his enthusiasm led him to his death in the Roman persecution.

Peter and Paul were two very different men; they came to Jesus in very different ways. Peter knew Jesus during his ministry. He travelled with him, was affirmed by him, questioned him, denied him and bitterly repented of his infidelity. He obviously loved him. Paul never met Jesus during Jesus' earthly life. His is one of the classic conversions of scripture. He came to a completely new way of understanding himself and his God.

I wonder what their contemporaries thought of these men. What was it really like in their time? Reading their stories, their exploits, we learn something of their humanity and how they influenced those around them, just as they were influenced by others and most of all by Jesus.

There are people like Peter and Paul among us still. They are recognisable in their differences, in their enthusiasm, in their single-mindedness about the things they believe to be of God. Sometimes they might annoy us; sometimes they seem to be too strong in their opinions, and sometimes we might wish they would move on and leave us in peace. But, as well as this, they are just, they are good, they are the willing and the kind. Some like them, some don't! Maybe you and I are among them.