

When I was in Wangaratta Cathedral recently looking at the walls of that very familiar place, I touched the stones from various ancient cathedrals in Britain. I noticed too that St John's Reid has a stone or two from other places and it made me think of our own, not so ancient stone, from St Philip's, Kensington. These stones remind us of our unity with one another across the Christian world and the legacy of the ancient foundations of our Church continued in and through us today. Just as the plaque we will dedicate today reminds us of the unity we still enjoy with Carola through her generosity and her legacy. Just as St Philip's links us in a profound, but as yet incomplete communion.

In days gone by Churches were, more often than not, built over the sites of great events, or the place of the tombs of the saints. Hence in Rome St Peter's is built over the tomb of St Peter. Canterbury Cathedral enjoyed a major phase of construction around the tomb of Thomas A'Becket. Legends surrounding our own St Philip suggest he preached the gospel in Phrygia and was crucified, perhaps upside down, at Hierapolis in modern day Turkey. The St. Philip Martyrium stands on top of the hill outside the northeastern section of the ruins of the Hierapolis city walls. It dates from the 5th century. There is also a church there dedicated, so the inscription reads, "to the memory of the holy and glorious apostle and theologian Philip". His remains were reputedly moved from there to the Basilica of the Twelve Apostles in Rome.

This building of shrines and tombs, the keeping of saintly relics was swept away at the Reformation. Shrines were destroyed, altars containing relics of saints removed, images of saints were defaced and the guilds that were devoted to the veneration of saints were disbanded. Names of Church patrons were changed. It is true much superstition had built up around such practices, but the whitewashed walls of the reformers left little to inspire us and impaired our unity with those who had gone before us, their lives and their witness. Witness being the operative word, many of these saints were martyrs including St Philip, witnesses to God revealed through the self-giving of themselves as they *literally* obeyed Christ's injunction "take up your cross and follow me."

So what of us, why are we recalling St Philip today? What does it mean to describe him as our Patron? There is no straightforward answer to this question, each of us will have a different take on it.

I think one of those takes is our building: I haven't managed to discover why St Philip was chosen as a dedication. Obviously it wasn't built over the tomb or shrine of some saintly individual. But what it does do is stand as a witness to what those saintly folk did. In our case Philip. And yes it true that the church is not the building, it is the people inside it, but the building is also important. Because it is here in these places that we seek reconciliation, between the material and the transcendent, the conscious and the subconscious, between our everyday working lives and our worship, and ultimately between God and humanity; 'believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me'. Bringing people to Jesus, 'come and see!' This is what our building says, Philip is an example to us as we seek to know God and make God known and as we strive to emulate his witness in our own time and place. Our building dedicated to St Philip speaks, no

shouts, to the world of the Incarnation and of the faith in the incarnation of those who have gone before us. This building in which heaven and earth come close *is* St Philip's.

But it is true that Church is not the building it is us as a community, a community under the patronage of St Philip. I was reading the gospel passage and the words of Philip, 'show us the father and we shall be *satisfied*.' This is the second time that Philip has used this word and he is the only person in the gospels to use this verb. At the feeding of the five thousand he says to Jesus that six month wages would not buy enough bread to *satisfy* the crowd. Philip is seeking satisfaction, 'Show us the Father,' but what does he mean? Does he want some sort of sign? Perhaps that has been a secret prayer of many of us. The request for a sign certainly appears a number of times in the gospels. There are some who think that if a large banner were unfurled in the sky which read 'I'm up here you idiots!' then all the issues regarding the existence or otherwise of God would be settled. I think not!

We all have fantasies of how God ought to work to in the world. The voice from heaven, the mighty demonstration of power, the argument clincher, the word or act that finally settles everything and takes away any doubt...yet God appears completely oblivious to this. The only real sign is the cross of Jesus. The disciples clearly did not want that and if truth be known neither do we. If you look at Mark's gospel very carefully when Jesus performs a miracle he tells his followers not to broadcast the event, because he knew it would be misunderstood. It was not the sign he wanted to project. But they do, they announce it to the world! At the resurrection the women find the tomb empty, the young man at the tomb says to them 'go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you.' But they don't? 'They said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.' That's how the oldest gospel originally ended! When the followers of Jesus are told to speak up, they can't! It's just too difficult. The cross turns everything upside down, are we really ready for that? Do we really want God to overturn our current way of life? We need perhaps to be careful what we pray for. It's a bit like St Augustine's famous saying when he was having a great time as a young man: God make me good...but not just yet!

I think Philip is airing the view of all of Jesus' disciples past and present; but we don't really know what we want. Philip had witnessed the feeding of the five thousand he had been instrumental in organising it, and yet he can still say to Jesus: *Show us the Father then we will be satisfied!* Those of you who grew up in early days of St Philip's would remember the words of the BCP Jesus' death was 'the one full perfect and sufficient sacrifice oblation and *satisfaction* for the sins of the whole world.' When folk tell me that they can't believe in a God who 'allows' terrible things to happen in the world, I feel like saying what exactly then do you want, what sign would satisfy you? Because the sign is the cross and it is the only one we have!

We are a pilgrim people, we journey in the footsteps of our patron together; 'This is the way; walk in it.' Like Philip we carry our crosses, we help carry each other's crosses and we pray that one day we may gather with him around God's throne when all those questions will be answered, we will be one in profound and complete communion, the communion of Saints...and yes we will be satisfied. Amen.