

Keep on doing all the things that you learnt from me, and have been taught by me, and have heard or seen that I do. Then the God of peace will be with you. [Phil. 4: 9](#)

It would make my life so much simpler if everyone did what I told them to do: and wouldn't they be much better for it too?

I'm sure you often feel like that about people, don't you?

When I had a 'day job,' I had 30 staff in three separate buildings, and in 13 locations in those buildings.

If they'd all been doing what they were supposed to be doing, my job would have been a breeze.

If they'd: "Have [done exactly what they'd] learned and received and heard and seen in me." [Phil. 4: 9](#) they'd have been perfect employees!!

But none of us is perfect, are we? I know I'm far from perfect.

Yet, here we have Paul, telling the Christians in Philippi to follow his example.

To do all the things they'd learnt through his teaching, and by living their lives after the manner of his life.

Now, this may entrench some people's prejudice of Paul that he was a Christian control-freak with an enormous ego.

He's either that: or he's a very humble man who knows his own strengths and weaknesses, and relies on His Lord, Jesus to shine His light into every small corner of his life.

My conviction is the latter: although Paul was a man with flaws and foibles and, like all the Saints, he wasn't an easy person to live with.

And, did you know, that Paul uses the word 'Saint' around 40 times in his Letters?

But when he uses it, he's not talking about those: "Who [to quote Eucharistic Prayer I] have gone before us with the sign of faith and who sleep in Christ, [in] a place of refreshment, light, and peace." [New English Translation of the Roman Missal 3<sup>rd</sup>. ed. 2011; EP I](#)

No; whenever he uses the word 'Saint' he means ordinary Christians – just like us – in those cities of the Roman Empire where they lived their ordinary lives – just like us.

All of us who profess the Christian faith, and strive to follow Jesus as our Saviour and Friend, are Saints in the making.

That might come as a surprise, a shock even, but that's the truth.

The alternative to striving to be a Saint is to turn our back on Jesus, and turn down His invitation to be part of the family of the Church on earth, and in heaven.

There's no middle way; no compromise: for Jesus said, did He not, that: "Anyone who puts a hand to the plough, and then looks back, is not fit for the Kingdom of God." [Lk. 9: 62](#)

So if we whole-heartedly accept the Lord's invitation, then our final dwelling place will not be the grave, but eternal life with the Him; because we: "Are those who are invited to the wedding feast of the Lamb." [Rev. 19: 9](#)

And we have a foretaste of that heavenly banquet every time we gather together around the altar to celebrate the Eucharist.

It's worth bearing in mind that the letters Paul wrote to the Christians in Philippi, or Ephesus, or Rome, and so on, were read out to them in those cities during their celebration of the Sunday Eucharist.

Remember, too, that they had to meet in one another's homes because they were a persecuted minority, and certainly weren't allowed to build churches to gather in.

We have the privilege, and gift, of being able to meet in a church building; and we're certainly not persecuted to death as those early Christians were.

Instead, we're often looked upon as an irrelevance in this modern world: a group of strange people who cling on to a belief in God.

What Paul is doing in every one of his letters is to encourage, and strengthen Christians in their faith in the face of a hostile environment.

His words can speak down the centuries, and do the same for us.

That, also, is what Fr. Paul and I try to do every time we preach and, hopefully, by the way in which we live out our Christian faith.

In today's passage from Paul's Letter to the Philippians, he's doing just that.

What he asks of the Christian's in Philippi is that they learn to trust the Lord to look after them; just as Paul has learnt to do in his life.

To ask the Lord for the grace to enable them to cast all their cares onto Him, because His shoulders are big enough to bear our burdens.

After all, they were big enough to carry the sins of the world, and our personal pain, anxiety, and suffering, to His death on the Cross at Calvary.

And anxiety was really at the heart of the pagan world in the Roman Empire.

They believed in so many gods and goddesses, who were potentially out to get them for some offence they mightn't even know about, that they never knew whether something bad was waiting for them just around the corner.

Isn't anxiety the malaise at the heart of our country too?

No, we don't believe in capricious gods and goddesses; but anxiety about everything haunts people. Anxiety about the economy; anxiety about terrorist attacks; anxiety about unemployment; anxiety about personal relationships: and, underneath it all, fermenting like a canker; the fear of death.

But we have the key, which will release people from those anxieties.

We have the words of eternal life spoken by Jesus, the Word of God, to offer to people who are living without hope; boxed in by fear and anxiety.

Yet, too often, we're afraid to speak those words, or live out those words; because we allow ourselves to be: "Squeezed into the shape dictated by the present age." Rm. 12: 2

We, like Paul in his time, need to give people in our time: "God's peace." Phil. 4: 7

But how do we achieve that?

By showing them by the way we live, and act, and speak, that: "God's peace, which is greater than we can understand, will keep guard over your hearts in Jesus." Phil. 4: 7 because His peace is in my heart.

And the treasure that we hold, which will give us God's peace, is prayer: a listening conversation with Jesus that covers every area of our life.

Prayer like that will mean that God's peace; a deep peace in the midst of life's problems, and storms will keep guard around our hearts and minds.

The experience of the Apostle Paul enables us to understand that even before we seek the Lord or pray to Him, it's He Himself who comes to meet us, who lowers Heaven to stretch out His hand to us, and raise us to His heights.

All He expects of us is that we trust totally in Him; that we really take hold of His hand.

And: "Then the God of peace will be with [us.]" Phil. 4: 9