

On this rock

21 8 11

It is good to be renewing acquaintance with Gareth again and visiting this beautiful church here in Dinard. As my text I have chosen Jesus' words to Peter in our gospel reading: "On this rock I will build my Church...". First of all let me say that I am not going to tackle the vicissitudes of 2000 years of church history that lie behind these words.

As a teacher of RE in a London comprehensive school, when studying the life of Jesus with a group of 12 year olds, I often set them a task when we start to look at the composition of the disciples. They are to write down a list of people they would choose in order to change the world. The lists that come back are frequently predictable. Barack Obama often figures and Nelson Mandela is a cast-iron certainty for over 50% of them as are, and this is pleasing to see, various parents and grandparents. I then go on to make the point that they have often chosen the powerful and the famous (Simon Cowell!?) in their lists but Jesus chose a rag-tag bunch of no-hopers: fishermen, tax collectors and political activists (some of his followers would in later centuries have earned the title 'terrorists' from those opposed to them. And yet it was on the 'rock' of a young fisherman in his early 20s (probably) who would later deny he knew him and would run away in tears at the crucial hour that he chose to build something that would and has changed the history of the world. God's rocks are the most unlikely ones!

Thus it has been for you in this church. Reading Alan Charters's book on Anglicans in Brittany it has been quite clear that the sole survivor in this area of France, the 'rock', has been the most unlikely church – not Paramé, not Dinan, not even St. Malo have survived, but little old Dinard has remained as the faithful witness of the Anglican Church in this area – the most unlikely of the originals. And what is more, it continues to grow from strength to strength! So, to those of you who worship here regularly I say keep building on this rock. I spoke to the proprietor of the hotel where we are staying and he spoke very highly of this building when he heard I was preaching here this morning. He spoke particularly of the beauty of the building, this little *bijou* in a corner of his town! It is clear that this place holds a place in the hearts of those who live here as well as of those who worship here.

But let me give a challenge to any who are visiting today. Do you feel rather like Peter – disciple who has little to offer to the Church or to the world at large? Well, perhaps Jesus' words to Peter are echoing down the years to another very unlikely person and saying again, "On this rock..." Amen.

Sermon preached at the Eucharist

St Bartholomew's Dinard

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St. Paul's, East Ham, London

