

30th June 2016 RADIO TEESDALE
Thought For The Day by Revd Eileen Harrop

People are often wary of 'the unknown'. It might take stagnation in one's life for a person to contemplate an unfamiliar option. Even then extra caution is exercised: "better the devil you know than the devil you don't", lest you "jump from the frying pan into the fire".

A month ago, I moved from the Weald of Kent to the Dales of County Durham. The move was not prompted by a desire to be closer to family and friends. This was a completely new and unfamiliar place. The opportunity to be the Priest in charge of Gainford and Winston, and the Entrepreneur Priest in Bishop Auckland, was unexpected. I felt a mixture of wonder and restraint, and the thought that I would need a lot of courage!

This week the Church remembers Peter and Paul, 2 apostles whose lives involved stepping into the unknown. Many Ordinations will take place this weekend because people who have heard God's call to become ordained ministers will step into a future of unfamiliar places like the first apostles.

But I am confident that like me, they will find at some point the same inspiring experience as Paul the missionary apostle. In his letter to the people of Rome, Paul wrote: Our sister Phoebe... will be coming to see you soon... help her in every way you can... Greet Priscilla and Aquila... Greet my dear friend Epenetus... Give my greetings to Mary. Then there are Andronicus and Junia", and so on. Paul concludes his extensive list with: "Greet each other in Christian love".

When my move north was announced, so many people eagerly shared their particular connections to Teesdale and County Durham. A lady wrote about having lived as a child on the Selaby Hall estate near Winston; someone else had spent two years in National Service near Barnard Castle; a fellow priest grew up in Gainford where his father still lives; and someone who moved south had been a volunteer with Bowes Museum. On arrival here, an extraordinarily generous welcome to match the extraordinarily picturesque pastoral landscape greeted my husband and me in Teesdale.

Having taken many journeys into unfamiliar places, I have found that God's world is not inherently a place of scary unknowns if we choose to place our confidence in Him.