

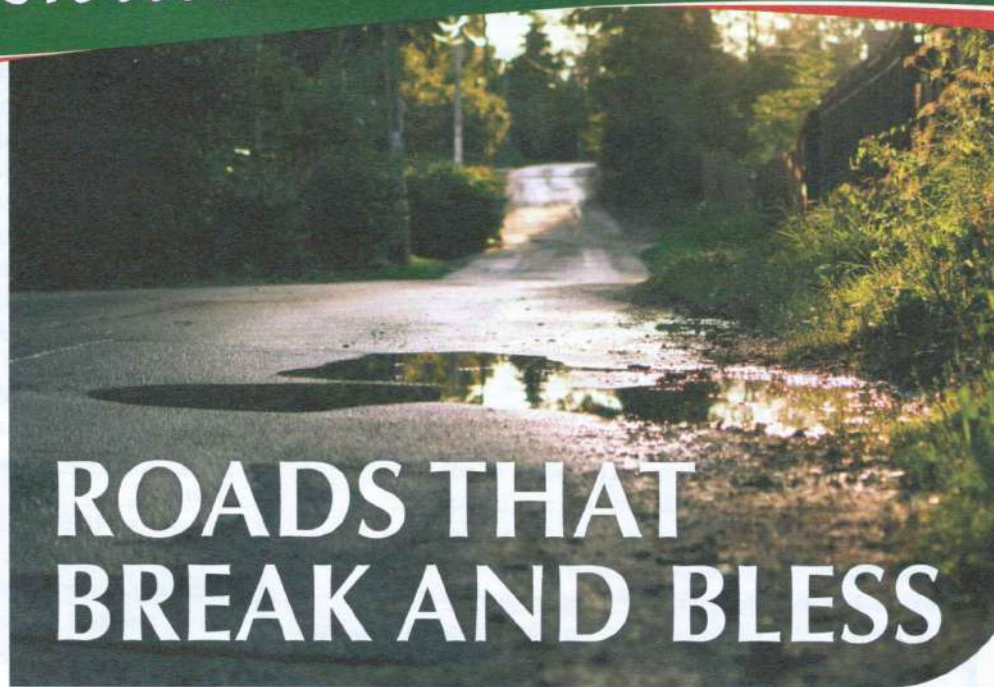
It's a case of from hero to zero in today's Gospel. Simon, who has just proclaimed Jesus as Messiah and got the title Peter, meaning 'Rock', is now called an 'obstacle' or in the original Greek 'skandalon' – literally a stumbling block to impede rather than a rock to build on. A friend of mine often comments that every day he prays to 'do the next right thing'. For him, life is about choices. So often he has found it has cost him promotion or popularity. You could be called to stand by someone who is sick, difficult or demanding. It might be to speak out when silence would be a lot easier. The path of suffering could be to remain faithful in a relationship, when it would make life a lot easier to walk away.

Suffering is hard, but something precious is always worth fighting for and what could be more precious than a relationship with God. It's true of our human relationships – we will do anything to preserve them. This can fly in the face of a society that measures success by wealth, power and status. Think again – for a meaningful life is not always an easy life. Very often it involves self-sacrifice and suffering.

We all struggle with suffering. Hinduism sees it as the result of

Behold the Lamb of God, ...
**Lord, I am not worthy
that you should enter under my roof,
but only say the word
and my soul shall be healed.**

Communion Antiphon (Ps 30:20)
**How great is the goodness, Lord,
that you keep for those who fear you.**



ROADS THAT BREAK AND BLESS

karma from past lives and says that you can hope by how you live in this one for a better reincarnation. Buddhism teaches that suffering arises from ignorance and attachment. It calls us to let go of desire, ego and clinging to things or relationships. Islam understands suffering as part of submission to the will of God, which can lead to repentance, spiritual growth and eternal reward. Our pre-Christian ancestors often attributed suffering to spirits, curses or hostile forces and applied rituals to protect themselves. You can see how much of a spiritual blending or hang-over people have from all these influences. How often have you heard people mutter 'karma' when someone gets their comeuppance? Christianity, however, which is much criticised,

holds that suffering should be met by trusting God for help and hope. We believe that God walks with us in suffering and that we actively work to relieve the suffering of others. It's not just a personal problem, it is a relational one.

Simon or Peter felt that suffering was wrong – we all feel the same. But suffering comes, the difference is that we are never alone in it. Nobody seeks a cross but, when they come, we do not carry them alone. The cross is not chosen for suffering – it is carried for love. And that is the difference. ■

— Tom Cox



Reflection

Who are the people who have inspired you by their generous love of others?



Lesson

It is in giving that we receive.



Prayer

Lord, grant that I may never want so much to be consoled as to console.

Prayer after Communion

Renewed by this bread from the heavenly table,
we beseech you, Lord,
that, being the food of charity,
it may confirm our hearts
and stir us to serve you in our neighbour.
Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.