

Reflection on Sunday 15 February 2026

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Flawed but faithful

Readings: 2 Peter 1: 12-21 and Matthew 17: 1-9 (Transfiguration)

Are there things in your life that you constantly get wrong? I don't mean big things, really important things, like choosing the wrong job or being in the wrong relationship. I mean small, domestic stuff.

We have a roller blind above the stair window in our house. It has two cords hanging down the side, one to lower the blind, one to raise it. Every evening, I go to lower the blind and always pull on the up cord. The next morning, I try to raise the blind and I pull the down cord and the blind folds up in a heap on the windowsill. We've had this blind in the house for six years and I have never pulled the right cord first time.

Here's another one: how many times have you driven into a petrol station; reached under the dashboard to release the fuel cap and the bonnet springs up?

Or USB cables! Why is it that I can never put a USB plug in a USB socket the right way up? Never! I look at the cable, I think, right, it's got those little black bits face side up, that's the way it goes in and it doesn't; it won't go into the socket, and I have to pull it out and turn it over and insert it again. Every single time!

That's why I think I'm a bit like Saint Peter. He was always getting things wrong. I bet if he was alive today, he wouldn't be able to put a USB plug into its socket the right way first time or pull the correct cord on my stairs blind. He would get there eventually, but not straight away.

The readings today give us a double dose of Peter, first a passage from Peter's Second Book and then Matthew's account of the Transfiguration, where Peter plays a central role. I want to focus on the reading, with only a sideways glance at the Transfiguration.

Peter has got to be our favourite disciple, hasn't he? He is the most human, the most like us. He's an impulsive working man; a fisherman who speaks too quickly and has to be corrected. He steps out of boats to walk on the water without thinking. He brandishes a sword – or probably a fishing knife – to protect Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane even though that is not what Jesus wants. He promises loyalty but ends up denying Jesus in fear. He deals with failure.

In the Gospel, we hear how he climbs a mountain with Jesus and witnesses the Transfiguration. Overwhelmed by what he's seen, his response reveals his devotion but also a misunderstanding. He recognises that something holy is happening, yet he tries to domesticate the glory into something manageable. He wants to freeze the experience — to live on the mountain in a community of three houses rather than let Jesus descend into the suffering that he has predicted.

This is classic Peter: sincere, bold, but slightly off target.

When we meet Peter in the First Reading, which should really follow the gospel, he has matured. He writes, not as the impulsive disciple, but as a seasoned shepherd. His words are urgent, humble and clear and this is born out of his previous failures which have given him grace.

He begins with a stunning declaration: God's divine power gives us everything we need for in life. Notice the confidence. But he is not saying: *God provides everything, so just sit back and relax.* Instead, he urges us to make every effort to add to our faith, our goodness, our knowledge, our self-control, perseverance, godliness, mutual affection, and love. All of that is good, but it's up to us. We have to build these things. We have to get on with it. Peter learnt this the hard way, but it also reflects his personality – action-oriented, direct and practical.

There is something deeply personal about this. Peter knows what happens when character is underdeveloped. His earlier life lacked self-control and perseverance. He reacted before thinking. But Jesus didn't discard him — Jesus formed him. And now Peter calls the church to the same formation. Spiritual maturity is not automatic; it is cultivated.

What changed Peter from an impulsive fisherman into a steady spiritual leader? It wasn't a personality transplant, but a growing belief. His boldness remained, but it was refined into conviction. His passion remained, but it was guided by wisdom. His failures became fuel for faithfulness.

I've made a lot of mistakes in my life. I've said the wrong things to people, been selfish and self-indulgent, I've acted inappropriately and I've been arrogant on occasions. But I hope I keep learning from those mistakes.

I remember driving on the M25 after it had been converted into a smart motorway. I ignored the overhead speed signs, not realising that they were no longer advisory but compulsory. I received a speeding fine and had to attend a speeding workshop. I learnt my lesson the hard way... the same as Peter learnt lessons in his life.

I know my speeding offence is not on the same level as Peter's mega mistakes but the principle is the same – learn from your errors, pick yourself up and try again.

Christ doesn't require perfect personalities to follow him because he can transform any willing heart. Like Peter, we are given everything we need. Like Peter, we are called to put in some of our own effort. And like Peter, we have to learn from our mistakes, knowing that those mistakes are likely to be God's attempt at teaching us a better way.

Amen.