

St Paul VI became Pope at one of the most turbulent moments in the modern history of the Church.

The world was changing rapidly.
The culture was becoming more secular.
Confusion and unrest spread everywhere.

And in the middle of it all, Paul VI carried an immense burden:
to keep the Church faithful to Christ while guiding her through a changing age.

And perhaps today's readings help us understand how he managed to do that.

Because both readings are about purification.

St Peter says: **"The end of all things is near."**

Not to frighten Christians, but to wake them up.

Live seriously.
Live prayerfully.
Live with eternity in mind.

And then he says something striking: **"Maintain constant love for one another."**

Because when times become difficult, charity often disappears first.

People become bitter.
Divided.
Suspicious.
Angry.

And yet the saints remain steady in love.

Paul VI knew this suffering personally.

He was criticised from every side.

Too traditional for some.
Too modern for others.

And yet he continued trying to serve the unity of the Church faithfully.

One of the loneliest things in the world is to stand in the middle while everyone around you demands extremes.

And yet that is often where true shepherds stand.

Then today's Gospel becomes severe.

Jesus enters the Temple and overturns the tables.

This shocks modern people because we often imagine Christ as endlessly soft or passive.

But today we see holy zeal.

Because worship matters.

The Temple was meant to be a house of prayer.

Instead it had become noisy, worldly, distracted, corrupted by commerce.

And Christ purifies it.

This is not anger for its own sake.

It is love defending holiness.

And perhaps this is one of the things Paul VI understood deeply.

The Church cannot simply become whatever the world wants her to become.

She must remain holy.

Faithful.

Prayerful.

Rooted in worship.

One of Paul VI's greatest sorrows was seeing confusion enter the Church after the Council.

He famously said: **"The smoke of Satan has entered the temple of God."**

Strong words.

But he was speaking about confusion, loss of faith, weakening reverence, moral uncertainty.

And many Catholics today recognise exactly what he meant.

Yet Paul VI never lost hope.

Because he believed Christ remains faithful to His Church.

And perhaps that is important now.

Many Catholics today feel anxious about the future:

- declining faith
- confusion in society
- weakening morality
- fewer vocations
- empty churches in some places

But the Church has lived through crises before.

And Christ still reigns.

Today's Gospel also contains a warning about fruitlessness.

Jesus approaches the fig tree looking for fruit.

And finding none, He curses it.

This is not random harshness.

It is a warning against outward appearance without inward life.

Leaves without fruit.

Religion without conversion.

And that warning applies to every Catholic generation.

A parish can have buildings, structures, committees, programmes—

and still slowly lose spiritual fruitfulness if prayer, sacrifice, holiness, and faith disappear.

That is why St Peter's words matter so much: **“Be calm so that you can pray.”**

Prayer keeps the soul alive.

Without prayer, faith becomes ideology or habit.

Without prayer, charity grows cold.

Without prayer, even Church work becomes empty activism.

Paul VI understood this deeply.

Beneath the immense pressures of the papacy was a man of prayer.

A man who loved Christ.

A man who suffered for the Church.

And perhaps history has become kinder to him with time.

Because many things he warned about proved painfully true.

Especially the dangers of a world separating freedom from truth.

And perhaps today the Lord asks us something simple:

Is our faith bearing fruit?

Not merely activity.

Fruit.

Do we pray?

Do we love?

Do we forgive?

Do we seek holiness?

Do we reverence the Mass?

Do we remain faithful when the world changes around us?

Because the Church is not saved by panic.

Nor by bitterness.

Nor by worldly compromise.

She is renewed by saints.

St Paul VI once said:

“Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers.”

And that remains true.

The world is exhausted by noise and argument.

What people long to see are lives transformed by Christ.

Lives with peace.

Purity.

Charity.

Joy.

Courage.

Lives that prove the Gospel is true.

So today let us ask St Paul VI to pray for the Church.

That we may remain faithful in confusing times.

Prayerful in distracted times.

Hopeful in anxious times.

And fruitful in a world that often no longer knows what true fruit even is.

Because Christ still seeks fruit from His people.

And He still has the power to purify, renew, and sanctify His Church.