



**Reflection on the Confession of Peter
Wednesday January 20, 2021
The Inauguration of the President of the
United States**

- 10 *Mercy and truth have met together; *
righteousness and peace have kissed each other.*
- 11 *Truth shall spring up from the earth, *
and righteousness shall look down from heaven.*

-Psalm 85:10-11

A few months after our wedding, my husband said to me, “I think marriage is teaching me to live with imperfection!” He was more bemused than irritated, more reflective than judgmental, and his statement has echoed throughout the forty years that we have been married as a particularly wise statement about marriage. Yes, in marriage, “living with imperfection” opens us to a deeper love for each other and for ourselves than we may have thought possible, and it may give us deeper sense of wonder at God’s mercy.

It strikes me that January 20th reminds us of the wisdom of leaning to live with imperfection. Simon Peter exemplifies a faith journey that progresses by fits and starts, penetrating insights alternating with impulsive foolishness. He proclaimed his faith and denied his relationship with Jesus with equal vehemence. The figure of Peter who emerges in the Gospels makes it clear that the call to discipleship is not a call to join an elite group and faith is not an escape from the flaws of ordinary people. Rather, our faith shows us how to navigate the unexpected paths to which God calls us and gives us reason to trust that our flaws may be windows into God’s purpose for us.

Even beyond the distortions of partisan political speech, our public discourse echoes with remarks about Biden’s imperfections as he is sworn in as the next President: We hear far too often that he’s too old; that he has a history of insensitive remarks; that he is too willing to compromise with his political opposition from both the right and the left; that he relies on a naïve and outdated vision of the world.

The story of Simon Peter may help us to stand more calmly in the glare of public attention and the cacophony of quick judgements. Jesus chose a profoundly imperfect man to lead his followers. He thereby taught us that our flaws allow us to hold onto each other as we walk into uncharted territory, trusting that our companions will compensate for our own blind spots and that their imperfections will help us recognize what we ourselves offer.