

Saints Peter and Saint Paul

Monday 29 June



About Saints Peter and Saint Paul

Saint Peter was a fisherman who became the leader of the apostles. He was not the best of orators. So many times his mouth worked faster than his brain and then he found he had to “retract” what he said or did. Yet Jesus still chose him to be the leader of the twelve, saying to Peter, “You are Peter, the rock on which I will build my Church.”

Saint Paul was not one of the twelve original Apostles. We know from the writings in the Acts to the Apostles how he persecuted the Christians with a passion. He stood by and approved the killing of Saint Stephen the first martyr (Acts 8:1). He met Christ on his way to Damascus. (ref) After this encounter he spread the Gospel around the Mediterranean Sea.

Today’s solemnity commemorates these two men who died during Nero’s persecution following the Great Fire of Rome. Both of them died as martyrs. Tradition tells us that Peter tried to flee Rome to avoid arrest and saw Jesus on the road. “Where are you going, Lord?” Peter asked. Jesus replied, “I am going to Rome to be crucified again.” Peter turned around and went back and chose to be crucified upside down because he did not feel worthy that he should die the same way as Christ.

Paul was arrested in Jerusalem and was sent to Rome where he was placed under house arrest. He was beheaded because as a Roman citizen he was not allowed to be crucified.

Peter became known as the ‘chief of the apostles’ and Paul the ‘apostle to the Gentiles’. They overcame their weakness of faith and we remember their faith, courage and leadership of the Church during the difficult early days.

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What can we learn from Saint Peter and Saint Paul's life?

God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom (1 Corinthians 1:25) and nothing could be truer than with Saints Peter and Paul. Saint Peter had a habit of second-guessing Jesus and Paul before his conversion as Saul persecuted the Church. Yet, Jesus saw there was some potential He could work with here and persevered. As we have seen both these men had their good and bad points **and there is a bit of the good and bad of Peter and Paul in each of us too.** Jesus didn't let them get away with things though. In return for denying Jesus three times at His Passion, after His Resurrection Jesus asked Peter three times if he loved him.

Paul didn't escape his dark past either. He was blinded for three days on his way to Damascus. But the Lord sent people to help Paul. We ought to think how often the Lord uses us or others as His instruments in the world.

Both these men allowed God's grace to work in and through them. We must be open to that as well. Like Peter 'chief of the apostles', may we be leaders in faith in our homes and communities, and like Paul the 'apostle to the Gentiles', may we bring others to know Christ. No one is perfect, but like Peter may we say: "Yes Lord I love you" (John 21:15-17) and like Paul may we acknowledge that in the end Christ is the prize we should have our eyes on (Philippians 3:14).

Collect

O God, who on the Solemnity of the Apostles Peter and Paul
give us the noble and holy joy of this day,
grant, we pray, that your Church
may in all things follow the teaching
of those through whom she received
the beginnings of right religion.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

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Gospel Matthew 16:13-19

You are Peter and on this rock I will build my Church

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi

he put this question to his disciples,

'Who do people say the Son of Man is?'

And they said,

'Some say he is John the Baptist, some Elijah,

and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.'

'But you,' he said 'who do you say I am?'

Then Simon Peter spoke up,

'You are the Christ,' he said 'the Son of the living God.'

Jesus replied, 'Simon son of Jonah, you are a happy man!

Because it was not flesh and blood that revealed this to you but my Father in heaven.

So I now say to you:

You are Peter and on this rock I will build my Church.

And the gates of the underworld can never hold out against it.

I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven:

whatever you bind on earth shall be considered bound in heaven;

whatever you loose on earth shall be considered loosed in heaven.'

Antiphon

Cf. Mt 16: 16, 18

Peter said to Jesus: You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.

And Jesus replied: You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church.

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Hymn for Memorial of Saints John Fisher and Thomas More (Martyrs)

1. O Lord we praise You for these men,
chosen and called to follow You,
despite their weakness in the faith
you showed them how to live anew.
2. Saint Peter was a fisherman
and yet you chose him as your rock;
the one on which you built your Church,
and made a shepherd of your flock.
3. Saint Paul met you along the way
to Damascus and lost his sight;
"Who are you, Lord?" he asked of you –
"I am the Christ, the world's true Light."
4. Saint Peter changed his mind and turned
to go back into Rome again,
and so they won the martyr's crown
by Cross and sword they both were slain.
5. Like these Apostles may we hear
the call to teach, live and proclaim
the Gospel that brings truth and light
to our dark world, that's marked by shame.

88.88 LM

Possible Tunes: O Waly Waly

Text: Chris deSilva and Alessio Loiacono

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Music Links to the Scripture Readings

[Praise to You, O Christ Our Saviour](#) - John B. Foley SJ

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