

Solemnity of Ss. Peter and Paul Day Mass C2025

Each nation on earth has its heroes and its champions. When we travel throughout the world, we see everywhere shrines and museums, memorials and monuments, built in memory of those heroes.

Heroes and champions are admired and celebrated for their bravery and their virtue. The excellence of their commitment and the integrity of their life make them the models to imitate for younger generations and the symbols to respect for older generations.

It is not only nations and peoples who have champions; the Church too has its heroes. The two apostles, Peter and Paul, we celebrate today are the heroes of the Church. They are the pillars who have contributed great deal to the foundation of the church. They have played a big role in the life of the Church and shaped its structure by their teaching and apostolic work. They have contributed to the advancement of the kingdom of God, the growth of the Church and the reception of eternal salvation by thousands of people of their time.

Both were animated with courage, abnegation and the sense of the mission received from our Lord. In the course of their apostolic journey, they were guided by God through the power of his Holy Spirit to brave dangers and accept sufferings for God's sake. They gave the best of themselves, each according to his gifts and talents, for the good of the Church

In spite of their differences in skills and abilities, they were all guided by a single purpose and a firm desire to serve Christ's Church by serving their brothers and sisters for whom our Lord gave his life on the cross.

By bringing Peter and Paul, in one single celebration, the Church wants to remind us that the Church is one, but has different ministries and charismas. Each minister has received his own vocation and gifts, but they all work for the same cause, which is the kingdom of God. That is how St Paul gave his life for the good news of Jesus in the gentile lands, as witness his different letters, while St Peter dedicated his for the Jews, his brothers. As workers in the vineyard of the Lord, they complete each other.

This is true today as it was in the past. In spite of our all differences, we are all called to work together as one people and for the glory of our Lord. Our differences, whatsoever it might be, should not be used to compete or to oppose each other, but as a way of enriching the Church with our gifts. When we forget such a truth, we destroy rather than build the Church.

Those two pillars of the Church, Peter and Paul, are truly the heroes of faith. To them belongs what we can call the heroism of faith. The heroism of faith does not seek its own glory because someone has talents, but is, above all, at the service of the growth of the kingdom of God and the proclamation of the Gospel.

At the heart of the heroism of faith is our Lord and not the individual. The individual, as talented as he might be, is just an instrument that God uses for his glory. In that sense, the person of our Lord meant a lot to Paul and Peter. When they went preaching, they always put him and his glory first. They never looked for their own glory. So, we see in the first reading Peter accepting suffering and jail for the sake of our Lord because he was convinced of the righteousness of the cause he was defending.

The means of the heroism of faith is witness and conviction of life. Without witness, faith becomes a mere slogan and the minister becomes a mere functionary fulfilling a human duty which is, at times, easy and, at other times, heavy.

That is why before leaving the responsibility of the Church to Peter, our Lord wanted him to give a strong witness and prove that he really knew who he was dealing with. And Peter, on behalf of the twelve, declared without hesitation that he was the Christ, the Son of the living God.

So, assured by Peter's confession, our Lord can give him authority over the Church. That authority is expressed in these words: "You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven".

There are two things we have to understand here. First, the church lives with a promise and guarantee of God's assistance until the end of time. Second, the symbolism of keys means that Peter has the trust of Jesus. In fact, we give the keys of our home when we go on vacation only to trusted friends so that they look after it. That is what our Lord has done.

That responsibility of feeding the sheep is continued today by the Pope and their successors. That is a very difficult task that today belongs to our pope Leo XIV. Let us pray for him that he might be assisted by the Holy Spirit to fulfill the task given him according to the will of our Lord. May God bless his ministry and leadership for the good of the whole Church..

Acts 12: 1-11; 2 Timothy 4: 6-8, 17-18; Matthew 16: 13-19



Homily Date: June 29, 2025

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Document Name: 20250629homily.pdf