

STS. PETER AND PAUL 2020

Acts 12: 1-11; 2 Tim. 4: 6-8, 17-18; Mt.16: 13-19

This weekend, we honor Sts. Peter and Paul, Apostles, and Patron Saints of our Church. Though their feast day is the 29th of June, which is this Monday, we recognize the importance of these two men by commemorating them and celebrating Mass today in their honor.

We are blessed to have them as our saints; Peter whom Christ made the foundation of His church and Paul whom Christ gave the mission to expand the church. Both worked fervently together and separately to give us our Church.

There are significant points in today's first two readings that I would like to bring to our attention.

In the first reading taken from the Acts of the Apostles, we are informed that King Herod had Peter arrested and thrown in prison.

The night before Peter was to go to trial, we are apprised of the following circumstances. "Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, fastened with double chains, while guards kept watch at the door. Suddenly an angel of the Lord stood nearby and light shone in the cell.

The Angel tapped Peter on the side and woke him. 'Hurry, get up!' he said. And the chains dropped from Peter's wrists. Peter then followed the angel out, but with no clear realization that this was taking place through the angel's help. Only later when Peter recovered his senses, did he realize exactly what was happening. As he said, "Now I know for certain that the Lord sent his angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod."

And in the second reading taken from the Second Letter to Timothy, Paul who was at the end of his life, had this to say to us,

"I am already being poured out like a libation. The time of my departure is near. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."

Like Peter who was released from his imprisonment, and saved by God, Paul was convinced that the Lord stood by his side and protected him. "That's how I was rescued from the lion's mouth ... and from every evil threat"

Throughout Peter's and Paul's life and service, the Lord was always there helping them, protecting them, working with them, speaking through them, and bringing success out of their efforts.

The Lord does the same for you and me, for all of us and the Church. We might not realize it, but God is always with us, his angels are always helping us, guiding us, and protecting us.

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With all the troubles, difficulties and hardship facing us today, just as the imprisonment, persecution and even death threatening Peter and Paul, we come to a deeper realization of the care, the love, the powers of our God.

And this should give us great hope and confidence. For how many of us really think we're worthy of God's grace while millions throughout the globe suffer and are inflicted by the COVID-19, experience families torn apart, communities laid waste, cities ransacked, buildings torched in fire by social unrest and political protests?

How many of us think we have what it takes to endure hardships and live the faith in the midst of chaos and persecution as Peter and Paul did. Maybe some of us do. But the rest of us, including myself, may sometimes wonder how to live our lives and trust God in these challenging times.

And, this feast of Sts. Peter and Paul assures us of exactly that. With all the suffering and the pain, the anguish and sorrow, Sts. Peter and Paul lived their lives, not in squander – but for a real and lasting worth.

“The crown of righteousness...” Paul says, “which the Lord, the just judge, will award on that day ... to all who have longed for his appearance.”

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ:

Often, we don't see the extraordinary in the ordinary. Before the outbreak of the coronavirus, tourists noticed the extraordinary on the outside of our church building. They would stop to take pictures and wonder about the upside down cross and sword mounted on the sides of the Cross of Jesus.

Like Peter and Paul, in this time of crisis many parishioners and volunteers took the extraordinary efforts during these weeks as the church reopens.

There are many parishioners who have tightened their belts, like the women in the gospel who gave her last coins, and continued to do and give whatever they could to keep the church afloat. We are grateful for their sacrifice, generosity, and service.

And we thank you, Peter and Paul, for showing us the powers of faith and the transforming love of God.

Thank you, Peter and Paul, for showing us the way of following the Lord out of this terrifying time that imprisons us. Thank you, Peter and Paul, for showing us how God can release us from our fears and helplessness.

We call on you, Peter and Paul, to pray for us, our Ohana, and every Family this day - that each of us will have the courage to be faithful Catholics and

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disciples of Jesus. May we always recognize just how much we need God, how much the Church needs each of us, how much God needs all of us. Amen.