

Feast of Ss. Peter and Paul Sunday 29 June 2017

“I say to thee that thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my Church.” Mt. 16:16

On this feastday, we celebrate the Solemnity of the two great Apostles of the Church, Sts. Peter and Paul. Both were men who overcame weakness; St. Peter denied Christ, and St. Paul persecuted the Church. Both repented and worked tirelessly to spread the gospel to all nations. Eventually, both proved their great love for Christ by dying as martyrs for the faith.

The Primacy of St. Peter as the Vicar of Christ

Today’s gospel from St. Matthew (16:13-19) tells us how Jesus conferred the Keys of the Kingdom upon St. Peter. First, Our Lord changed the apostle’s name. He would no longer be called Simon, but Peter because, as the name signifies, he would be the rock upon which Christ would build His Church. Peter, as *rock*, is an image that has endured for centuries to our present day. Christ likens Peter to a rock because he will have the strength of the foundation of His Church. Thus the image of rock illustrates the primacy of Peter and his successors, the Popes of the Roman Catholic Church. St. Peter and all the Popes enjoy primacy because they govern the Roman Catholic Church which alone has the four marks of truth: One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic. It is indeed the “One only” Church, whose sole founder and head is Christ who chose Peter to represent Him after he proclaimed: ***“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God.”*** Mt. 16:16. St. Peter is the Head of the Church. St. Ambrose would say, ***“Where Peter is, there is the Church.”*** This means that wherever we find the Pope, St. Peter’s successor and the Vicar of Christ, there is the Church. This sense of belonging to the Church should fill us with great joy. Today’s feast in honour of the two great Apostles, Sts. Peter and Paul, should inspire in us great joy in thanksgiving to God, the Father, for bringing us to the Church established by His Son and sanctified by His Holy Spirit. St. Cyprian reminds us of the deep gratitude which we rightly must have for the Catholic Church: ***“He cannot have God for His Father who does not have the Church for his Mother.”***

“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God.” Mt. 16:16

When we honour St. Peter today, we are in reality honouring Christ whom St. Peter knows to

be the Son of God. Jesus is the chief cornerstone of the Church, and St. Peter is the rock upon which Jesus built His Church. As the Vicar of Christ on earth, we, also are, as St. Peter tells us, the ***“living stones built upon a spiritual house, a holy priesthood,”*** (I Pt. 2:5) with Christ Jesus as the cornerstone. Like St. Teresa of Avila, we should be ***“a daughter (or son) of the Church.”*** We should be true children of the Church who are willing to sacrifice ourselves for the needs of Holy Mother Church. In today’s Epistle (I Pet. 1:1-7) St. Peter reminds of us of joy which we will have in suffering for Christ: ***“Wherein you shall greatly rejoice, if now you must for a little time made sorrowful in divers temptations: that the trial of your faith, much more precious than gold (which is tried by the fire), may be found unto praise and glory and honour, at the appearance of Jesus Christ our Lord.”*** Today, the Holy Roman Catholic Church is suffering in its members who are persecuted for the Catholic faith. If we truly love Christ, then we will love the Catholic faith and be willing to suffer all that God sends us for the good of all the members of Christ’s Mystical Body, the Church Militant on earth.

St. Paul, the Apostle of the Gentiles

We are all familiar with St. Paul, known formerly as Saul, a zealous Jew, who persecuted the faith of the early Christians so much that he rode to Damascus in order to bring them back to Jerusalem for punishment. It was on his way to Damascus, that Saul was converted by being knocked off his horse by blinding light. Once he knew that he was actually persecuting Jesus Christ, the Nazarean, in the person of the members of His Church he was never the same again. Now, as Paul, all that mattered to him was to be like Jesus Christ, poor and crucified: ***“It is no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me. And the life that I live now in the flesh, I live in faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself up for me.”*** Gal. 2:20 St. Paul imitated Christ when he gave himself totally to spreading the gospel. He was unconcerned about himself and suffered all kinds of dangers and failures: ***“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or hunger, or nakedness, or danger, or the sword.”*** Rom. 8:5 St. Paul knows that he is the instrument chosen by God to bring the gospel to all the people who were not Jews, that is, the Gentile world: ***“But when it pleased him who from my mother’s womb set me apart and called me by***

his grace to reveal his Son in me that I might preach him among the Gentiles... Gal. 1:15-6

The Blessings of the Grace of God

St. Paul's conversion is a powerful lesson to all of us on the power of God's grace. Paul, formerly Saul, was so zealous for the Jewish faith that he was blinded to the goodness of the Christians. He may even have seen Jesus and also been blinded like so many other Jews of his day. St. Augustine tells us that St. Paul's passionate zeal was like an impenetrable jungle. Although it was a great obstacle, it nevertheless showed St. Paul's natural talent. God who sees the heart knew this and gave Paul the grace of conversion. St. Paul would allude to the fact that he and all Christians were chosen from all eternity: *"He chose us in him before the foundation of the world."* Eph. 1:4 *"He has redeemed us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace which was granted to us in Christ Jesus before the world existed.* II Tim 1:9. Oh, how mysterious and powerful was the grace of God in the life of St. Paul.

Zealous Apostles

St. Peter and St. Paul, lived not for themselves, but for Jesus Christ. Both had been sinners who were selected by Jesus for very special missions: St. Peter was to be the first Pope and the rock upon which Jesus built His Church; St. Paul was to be the Apostle to the Gentiles. Both Apostles knew that Jesus spared nothing in His love for them and all men, and they also felt compelled to give themselves for their brethren in the Church. Both were martyrs for the faith, and both spoke boldly for Christ as they knew that they had to obey God rather than men. We should imitate these holy Apostles in their zeal for the faith, and then we will rejoice with them and account the sufferings of this life as nothing in comparison to the great reward promised those who love and serve God. St. Paul knew of this reward and said: *"Eye has not seen, or ear heard, nor has it entered the mind of man what God has prepared for those who love him."*

The First Friday, 7 July 2017

Now is a good time to continue (or begin) the devotion to the **"Nine First Fridays"** of the Month. The Sacred Heart of Jesus promised to St. Margaret Mary: **"I promise thee in the excessive mercy of My Heart that My all-powerful love will grant to all those who communicate on the First Friday in nine consecutive months, the**

grace of final penitence; they shall not die in My disgrace nor without receiving the Sacraments; My Divine heart shall be their safe refuge in this last moment." There is no better way to honour the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus than doing the **"Nine First Fridays"** every month.

The First Saturday of the Month

1 July 2017

Our Lady told Sr. Lucia in 1925 **"...I promise to assist at the hour of death, with all the graces necessary for salvation, all those who, on the first Saturday of five consecutive months go to confession and receive Holy Communion, recite five decades of the Rosary and keep me company for a quarter of an hour while meditating on the mysteries of the Rosary, with the intention of making reparation to me."** If only we would do what Our Lady asks, we would be assured of eternal salvation. Our Lady promises us all the graces necessary for our salvation if we keep ***The Five First Saturdays!*** Just think that when you are about to die that the Blessed Virgin Mary will be there with you to help you get to heaven! **"Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen"** How many times have you said these words in your lifetime?