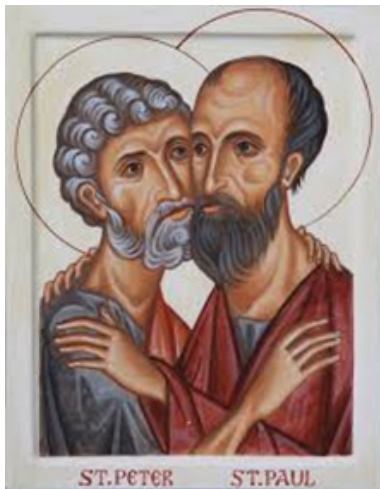


12th Week in Ordinary Time



On Friday 29 June, we celebrate the solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul.

BE STILL

Gathering Prayer

Loving God,
Draw near to us as we sit, think and reflect upon your word.
Open our hearts in order that we can hear your voice.
Amen.

THIS WEEK

- **28 June:** St Iraeneus, *martyr* (Memorial)
- **29 June:** Sts Peter and Paul, *apostles* (Memorial)

THE GOSPEL

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew (16: 13-19):

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.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

Ponder

Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013) noted that in the presence of God, during a recollected reading of the text, it is good to practice *Lectio Divina* – the reading of God's word in prayer asking that it 'enlighten and renew' us. The following questions may help with this:

- Lord, what does this text mean to me?
- What is it about my life that you want me to change by this text?
- What troubles me about this text?
- Why am I not interested in this?
- What do I find pleasant about this text?
- What is it about this word that moves me?
- What attracts me?
- Why does it attract me?

Reflect

St Peter and St Paul are two of our more complex ancestors! They had their character flaws but their hearts were open and they heard and responded to Jesus' call. We meet Peter in the Gospels and he is anything but firm in his faith at times – even denying that he was with Jesus (Mt 26:69–75; Mk 14:66–72; Lk 22:54–61) in the dramatic events leading to Jesus' crucifixion. And yet it is Peter who saw who Jesus was and who had a heart to respond to Jesus' call.

The story of St Paul is no less extraordinary. A religious Jew, he persecuted Christians until his 'Damascus' road revelation (Acts 9) where he had the transformative experience of hearing Jesus speak to him. St Paul heard and responded and went on to become one of the great missionaries of the early Church.

Perhaps the humanness of Peter and Paul is a reminder to us that our God is a God who calls to us in the depths of our hearts – regardless of our life circumstance!

PRAY

Reflect on the words of the Solemn Blessing for the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul, Apostles:

*May almighty God bless you,
for he has made you steadfast in Saint Peter's saving confession
and through it has set you on the solid rock of the church's faith.
And having instructed you
by the tireless preaching of Saint Paul,
may God teach you constantly by his example
to win brothers and sisters for Christ.
So that by the keys of St Peter and the words of St Paul,
and by the support of their intercession,
God may bring us happily to that homeland
that Peter attained on a cross
and Paul by the blade of a sword. + Amen.*