

1. Read (Seek) — Read the verses slowly and prayerfully several times. Write down any words or phrases that seem to stand out:

2. Meditate (Find) — Now begin to reflect on the verses and ask God what it means and how he wants to speak to you through the passage. **God what are you saying to me through this?**

3. Pray (Ask) — Respond from your heart to what God has been saying to you. **What do you want me to know?** Write down your prayer to him or record whatever he says to you.

4. Contemplate (Taste) — Be quiet before the Lord enjoying His presence. **How is God calling you to act in response to what he has shown you?**

[1] Pope Paul VI [2] Daily Roman Missal 3rd Edition, pg. 1785

[3] Divine Intimacy pg. 1137 [4] CCC 552 [5] CCC 552

[6] Divine Intimacy pg. 1137

[7] Daily Roman Missal 3rd Edition, pg. 1785

[8] Divine Intimacy, vol. II, pg. 265

[9] Divine Intimacy, vol. II, pgs. 265-266

[10] The Roman Martyrology pg. 133

[11] Fernandez, In Conversation with God 6, 56.3 pg. 370

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Gospel Reading – Matthew 16:13-19

When Jesus went into the region of Caesarea Philippi he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” They replied, “Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter said in reply, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Jesus said to him in reply, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father. And so I say to you, 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.”

Spiritual Reading – Office of Readings

From a sermon by Saint Augustine, bishop

This day has been made holy by the passion of the blessed apostles Peter and Paul. We are, therefore, not talking about some obscure martyrs. *For their voice has gone forth to all the world, and to the ends of the earth their message.* These martyrs realized what they taught: they pursued justice, they confessed the truth, they died for it. Saint Peter, the first of the apostles and a fervent lover of Christ, merited to hear these words: *I say to you that you are Peter*, for he had said: *You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.* Then Christ said: *And I say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church.* On this rock I will build the faith that you now confess, and on your words: *You are the Christ, the Son of the living God*, I will build my Church. For you are Peter, and the name Peter comes from *petra*, the word for “rock,” and not vice versa. “Peter” comes, therefore, from *petra*, just as “Christian” comes from Christ. *As you are aware, Jesus chose his disciples before his passion and called them apostles; and among these almost everywhere Peter alone deserved to represent the entire Church. And because of that role which he alone had, he merited to hear the words: To you I shall give the keys of the kingdom of heaven.* For it was not one man who received the keys, but the entire Church considered as one. Now insofar as he represented the unity and universality of the Church, Peter’s preeminence is clear from the words: *To you I give*, for what was given was given to all. For the fact that it was the Church that received the keys of the kingdom of God is clear from what the Lord says elsewhere to all the apostles: *Receive the Holy Spirit*, adding immediately, *whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven, and whose sins*

you retain, they are retained. Rightly then did the Lord after his resurrection entrust Peter with the feeding of his sheep. Yet he was not the only disciple to merit the feeding of the Lord's sheep; but Christ in speaking only to one suggests the unity of all; and so he speaks to Peter, because Peter is first among the apostles. Therefore do not be disheartened, Peter; reply once, reply twice, reply a third time. The triple confession of your love is to regain what was lost three times by your fear. You must loose three times what you bound three times; untie by love that which your fear bound. Once, and again, and a third time did the Lord entrust his sheep to Peter. Both apostles share the same feast day, for these two were one; and even though they suffered on different days, they were as one. Peter went first, and Paul followed. And so we celebrate this day made holy for us by the apostles' blood. Let us embrace what they believed, their life, their labors, their sufferings, their preaching and their confession of faith.

Peter and Paul – Lesson and Discussion

“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

Today we celebrate a very important feast in the Church, the solemnity of Peter and Paul. “The Apostles Peter and Paul are considered by the faithful, and rightly, as the first pillars, not only of the Holy Roman See, but also of the universal Church of the living God, spread to the utmost bounds of the earth. Founders of the Church of Rome, the Mother and teacher of the other Christian communities, it was they who gave impulse to its growth by the supreme testimony of their martyrdom suffered in Rome with fortitude: Peter, whom Our Lord Jesus Christ chose as the foundation of his Church and Bishop of this illustrious city, and Paul, the Doctor of the Gentiles, teacher and friend of the first community founded here.”[1]

Why do we celebrate this solemnity? “Sts. Peter and Paul are the principal Pillars of the Church founded by Christ. St. Peter was chosen by Christ to be his first Vicar on earth; he was endowed with the power of the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven and given the role of Shepherd of Christ's flock. In St. Peter and his successors, the popes, there is a visible sign of unity and communion in faith and charity. Divine grace led St. Peter to profess Christ's divinity. He suffered martyrdom under Nero about AD 64 and is buried at the hill of the Vatican.”[2] Both men helped establish the Church in Rome.

Why are Peter and Paul consider the “pillars of the church”? “The Feast of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, Princes of the Church, awakens in our souls a greater love for the Church and for our Holy Father the Pope.”[3] We should remember that Peter is always first among the members of the Church. “Simon Peter holds the first place in the college of the Twelve.”[4] He is first among the apostles in scripture and first among the names of this holy day. “Because of the faith he confessed Peter will remain the unshakeable rock of the Church. His mission will be to keep this faith from every lapse and to strengthen his brothers in it.”[5] Saint Ambrose said, “Where Peter is, there is the Church.” “This means that wherever the Pope, Peter's successor, is, there the Church is. Rightly, then, should we consider the Feast of St.

Peter as the Feast of the Church, the Feast of our Holy Father the Pope, and one which should awaken in every Christian soul a profound sense of belonging to the Church and of devotion to the Sovereign Pontiff.”[6] However, this does not negate the importance of Saint Paul. After Saint Peter, Paul is the second most important apostle. Without Paul, who knows what would have happened to the Church between the conversion of Jews and Gentiles at that time. Because of Paul who knows if Christianity would have spread as far and as fast as it did. “St. Paul was chosen to form part of the College of Apostles by Christ himself after his dramatic conversion on the road to Damascus. Selected to bring Christ's name to all peoples, he was a great missionary, advocate of pagans, and ‘Apostle of the Gentiles.’”[7]

Why do we have the feast day with Peter and Paul together? These men are so important to the Church that they have their own individual feast days as well as today to celebrate them together. “The Liturgy unites in a single celebration Peter, the head of the Church, and Paul, the Apostle of the gentiles. Both are the living foundation of the Church, built up by their labors and their ceaseless preaching, and made fruitful in the end by their martyrdom.”[8] The other reason we celebrate them together is because both Peter and Paul were martyred on the same day. The readings for the mass have them imprisoned and in chains. “The two Apostles in chains bear witness that only those who know how to face tribulations, persecutions, and even martyrdom for Christ are truly his disciples. At the same time their experience show that Christ does not abandon his apostles when they are persecuted: he intervenes on their behalf to save them from danger- for instance, as Peter was freed from prison-or to sustain them in their vicissitudes, as Paul declares: ‘The Lord stood by me and gave me strength...The Lord will rescue me from every evil and save me for his heavenly kingdom.’”[9]

How did Peter and Paul die? Peter was crucified upside down upon request because he did not feel worthy to be crucified right side up as his Lord. Paul was beheaded because he was a roman citizen and had that right to be executed in that manner. “At Rome, the birthday of the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, who suffered in the same year and on the same day, under the Emperor Nero. The former [Peter] was crucified in that city, with his head downward, and was buried in the Vatican near the Triumphal Way; and there he is honoured with the veneration of the whole world. The latter was slain with the sword, and buried with like honour on the Via Ostiensis.”[10]

What can we learn from Peter and Paul? Saints Peter and Paul are the perfect examples of what it means to be a Christian. Peter shows that despite weakness we can become great only in Christ. Paul shows us that in spite of our past sins Jesus can call us out of sin and we can make a full conversion. “As we conclude our meditation we ask him for this same fidelity, in spite of the setbacks we suffer and all the obstacles we shall find placed in our way because we are Christians. We ask him to make us firm in the faith, fortes in fide, just as Saint Peter asked with the first Christians of his day to be.”[11]