

Sunday Message

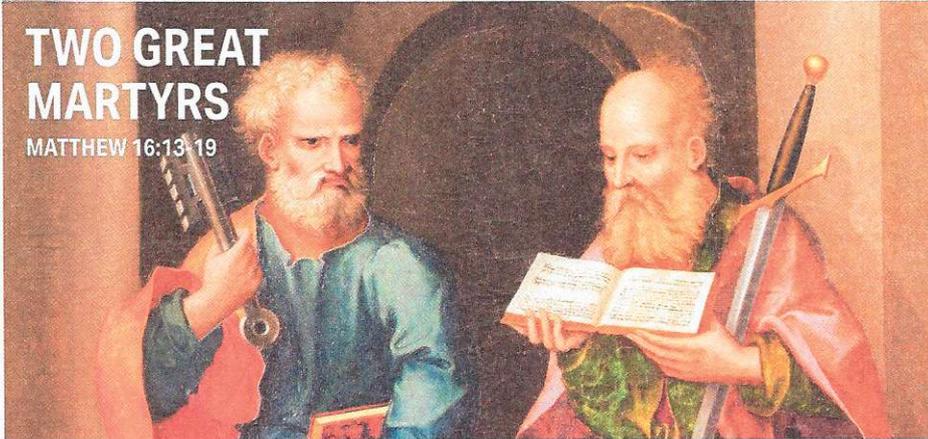
SOLEMNITY OF ST PETER AND ST PAUL

THE WORD

Year C • 29 June 2025 • Psalter Week 1

TWO GREAT MARTYRS

MATTHEW 16:13-19



Jesus has been going around curing sick people and performing miracles, which has made him quite a celebrity. But he has also become a target, and those in authority are out to get him. They are trying to turn public opinion against him, and things are hotting up.

Jesus asks his disciples to be honest with him. He wants to know what people are saying about him. His friends are nervous and embarrassed. They fudge the issue and tell him only the good things.

Well, they begin, some say you are John the Baptist. Others that you are Elijah, while others think you're Jeremiah or one of the other great prophets.

But Jesus cuts to the chase: "What about you?" he says. "Who do you say that I am?"

While the others stop to think about their response, Peter rushes forth with the winning answer. For him, Jesus is no mere prophet or returned figure from the past. He is the Messiah, God's own Son, the one whose coming the scriptures had foretold.

For the first time, it seems the disciples are beginning to recognise who Jesus really is. But events then take an unexpected turn, which no doubt leaves Peter dumbstruck.

Jesus blesses Peter for his answer, and gives him authority in the community. Peter will be the unshakeable rock upon which Christ will build his Church, Jesus says, and will hold the keys of the kingdom of heaven.

Peter, and later Paul, knew that Jesus was their Lord and Saviour. They spent their lives after the resurrection and ascension of Jesus preaching that Good News, building up the early Church. Both died in martyrdom. Both were instrumental in laying the foundations for the Church we have today.

That is why we honour them with today's Solemnity. Like Peter and Paul, we know who Jesus is and we too are called to make him known as best we can. ■

DO

Though leaders of the Church, Peter and Paul were both acutely aware of their faults and failings. They knew they were far from perfect. Think about your life. What are your failings? What do you need to do to be closer to God? From whom might you need to seek forgiveness?

SAY

"Lord, I know that you are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

PRAY

Ask the Lord to help you to know who he is and to witness to him to the best of your ability, following the example of Peter and Paul.

LEARN

God sees the potential in everyone.

Each of us is called to build up the community of faith.

The Christian is never too proud to seek and accept forgiveness.

REFLECT

As leaders of the early Christian community, Peter and Paul were wonderful teachers and witnesses to the Gospel. They instructed people by their words and actions. They offer us some essential lessons, too.

They teach us about humility. Because we are human, we are not perfect. Despite our best efforts, we mess up, we make mistakes. Sometimes we make big mistakes. Peter and Paul made big mistakes, too. When Jesus was arrested, Peter denied that he even knew Jesus. He was afraid to stand up and be counted. Paul eagerly persecuted the early Christians. He wanted to destroy the Church, to wipe out the Jesus movement before it gained in popularity. Yet both Peter and Paul went on to lead the Church and both were instrumental in building it up. Each died a martyr's death.

They could easily have given up and walked away, embarrassed by their behaviour, or they could have doubled down, refusing to admit they had been wrong. Instead, they were humble enough to admit their mistakes, and to start over. They were humble enough to acknowledge their weaknesses and to learn from them. Peter and Paul teach us the importance of humility.

Peter and Paul also teach us about forgiveness. Because we are human, we can find it hard to forgive those who hurt us. We can also find it hard to forgive ourselves or to accept forgiveness when offered it. Both Peter and Paul had let God and themselves down badly. When they realised what they had done, they could have given into despair (as Judas Iscariot had), and regarded their situation as lost. They could have refused to believe that God would give them another chance, that redemption was possible. Instead, they trusted in God's mercy and love, and having experienced God's forgiveness, they were able to forgive themselves and to start over as men made whole again. Without believing in and accepting God's forgiveness, without allowing it to transform their lives, they could never have become the extraordinary saints and martyrs we celebrate today.

Peter and Paul teach us about the transformative power of forgiveness offered and accepted. God is always ready to forgive us. Like the apostles, we just need to believe and accept it. ■

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

*These are the ones who, living in the flesh,
planted the Church with their blood;
they drank the chalice of the Lord
and became the friends of God.*

COLLECT

O God, who on the Solemnity of the Apostles Peter and Paul give us the noble and holy joy of this day, grant, we pray, that your Church may in all things follow the teaching of those through whom she received the beginnings of right religion. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

FIRST READING Acts 12:1-11

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

In those days: Herod the king laid violent hands on some who belonged to the church. He killed James the brother of John with the sword, and when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. This was during the days of Unleavened Bread. And when he had seized him, he put him in prison, delivering him over to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending after the Passover to bring him out to the people. So Peter was kept in prison, but earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church.

Now when Herod was about to bring him out, on that very night, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries before the door were guarding the prison. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood next to him, and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him, saying, 'Get up quickly.' And the chains fell off his hands. And the angel said to him, 'Dress yourself and put on your sandals.' And he did so. And he said to him, 'Wrap your cloak round you and follow me.' And he went out and followed him. He did not know that what was being done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision. When they had passed the first and the second guard, they came to the iron gate leading into the city. It opened for them of its own accord, and they went out and went along one street, and immediately the angel left him. When Peter came to himself, he said, 'Now I am sure that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting.'

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 34(33):2-3. 4-5. 6-7. 8-9. R. 5

R: From all my terrors the LORD set me free.

1. I will bless the LORD at all times,
praise of him is always in my mouth.
In the LORD my soul shall make its boast;
the humble shall hear and be glad. **R.**
2. Glorify the LORD with me;
together let us praise his name.
I sought the LORD, and he answered me;
from all my terrors he set me free. **R.**
3. Look towards him and be radiant;
let your faces not be abashed.
This lowly one called; the LORD heard,
and rescued him from all his distress. **R.**
4. The angel of the LORD is encamped
around those who fear him, to rescue them.
Taste and see that the LORD is good.
Blessed the man who seeks refuge in him. **R.**

SECOND READING 2 Timothy 4:6-8, 17-18

A reading from the Second Letter of Saint Paul to Timothy.

Beloved: I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me, but also to all who have loved his appearing.

The Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth. The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

ACCLAMATION BEFORE THE GOSPEL Matthew 16:18

R: Alleluia, alleluia.

You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church,
and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

R: Alleluia.

GOSPEL Matthew 16:13-19

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

At that time: When Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, 'Who do people say that the Son of Man is?' And they said, 'Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Simon Peter replied, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' And Jesus answered him, 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

May the prayer of the Apostles, O Lord,
accompany the sacrificial gift
that we present to your name for consecration,
and may their intercession make us devoted to you
in celebration of the sacrifice.

Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

*Peter said to Jesus: You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.
And Jesus replied: You are Peter,
and upon this rock I will build my Church.*

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Grant us, O Lord,
who have been renewed by this Sacrament,
so to live in the Church,
that, persevering in the breaking of the Bread
and in the teaching of the Apostles,
we may be one heart and one soul,
made steadfast in your love.

Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.