

June 29, 2025

Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul

(Note: Reflections follow for the Gospels for both the vigil Mass Saturday and the Solemnity Mass during the day Sunday.)

John 21:15-19 (Vigil Mass)

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs."

He then said to him a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep."

He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was distressed that he had said to him a third time, "Do you love me?" and he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep."

Amen, amen, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to dress yourself and go where you wanted; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." He said this signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when he had said this, he said to him, "Follow me."

Background:

The Mediterranean culture today, as it did at the time of Jesus, has its unique system of loyalty. Their loyalty is strongly tied to the leader (Jesus), but not to one another. From this perspective, the arguments between them, even at the Last Supper, begin to make sense. That cultural trait would have persisted after Jesus' death until they could work out among themselves where and in whom they would place their loyalties.

In John's Gospel's description of the Good Shepherd, Jesus says that the gatekeeper lets in the one whom he identifies as the good shepherd. The good shepherd is further described as the one who goes ahead of the sheep and leads them (John 10:3-4). Recall the arrest of Jesus and his being taken to the house of the high priest. The beloved disciple is described in terms that parallel the role of the good shepherd. Both Peter and the beloved disciple follow Jesus, but it is the beloved disciple who is permitted to enter the inner courtyard. He speaks to the gatekeeper, who then brings Peter in. The beloved disciple is described as the one who follows Jesus through the gate. It is he who is recognized by the gatekeeper and is permitted to enter. Lastly it is he who leads, who goes before Peter and leads him into the courtyard (John 18:15-27). John's description of Jesus' celebration of the Passover meal with his disciples also places John in the most significant role. It is John, the beloved, who sits next to Jesus. Jesus indicates the identity of the betrayer to him. Peter then asks the beloved disciple about whom Jesus was speaking (John 13:21-30). Both of these texts suggest that John was being cast as the beloved disciple and being placed in a more favored light than Peter. This may also indicate a struggle within the early Christian community as to whom would become the head of the community after the ascension of Jesus.

The Gospel text for this feast does not include the full account of Jesus' encounter with Peter and the disciples, but the encounter begins with Peter taking the lead by saying that he is going fishing, and then the others join him. When the disciples encounter Jesus after a long night of fishing, it is John who first recognizes that it is Jesus on the shore. But it is Peter who jumps into the water to join Jesus on the shore. After the breakfast that Jesus has prepared for the disciples, it is to Peter that Jesus turns to with the question, "Do you love me?" In this dialogue, Jesus gives Peter the role of caring for his flock. Peter has become the Good Shepherd.

Reflection Questions:

1. What were your thoughts and feelings before and during the election of Pope Leo XIV?
2. How did you feel about the conclave after and following the election of Pope Leo XIV?

3. Why do you think Peter decides to go fishing? What do you think fishing represents for Peter at this point in his life?
4. Does the question, "Do you love me?" or the exhortation, "Feed my sheep" draw your attention?
5. Do you ever feel like Jesus is asking you, "Do you really love me?" How do you respond at this point in your life?
6. How does this text speak to you? How would you like to respond?

Matthew 16:13-19 (Masses during the day)

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 Messiah, 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."

Background:

At the time of Jesus, the Jews were hoping for the coming of the Messiah. They believed that the anointed one of God would bring peace to the world and restore Israel as a great and powerful nation. John the Baptist preached a baptism of repentance in which people pledged to change their lives in order to prepare for the coming of that day when the anointed would appear. People of all walks of life flocked to be baptized by John. The responses by the disciples that are reported in today's Gospel, and even Peter's response, should be understood in the context of their day.

The culture of the west and in the United States is more individualistic than that found in many other places in the world. Mediterranean people are described as dyadic personalities. They are "other"-oriented and do not have a sense of themselves apart from their family and community. Jesus was part of this cultural world. From this perspective, perhaps his question to the disciples may not have been so much an inquiry into what people and his closest followers were thinking of him but part of his search for self-understanding. Perhaps Jesus grew in his own understanding of himself as his life unfolded.

In the text, Jesus asked what people are saying about him using the title 'Son of Man.' Their responses refer to religious persons who are already dead, suggesting that they believe Jesus to be a religious figure who has come back to life. Jesus turns his question to the disciples, where Peter acts as the spokesperson. Peter states that Jesus is "the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

Reflection Questions:

1. When you think of rocks, what qualities come mind?
2. Have you ever gone through a phase when you seriously questioned what you were about, where you were going, and who you really were? What was helpful during this stage? What was not helpful?
3. Have you ever asked others about how they saw you?
4. Has anyone ever said something to you that gave you an insight into yourself?
5. Why do you think Jesus asked the disciples who he was?
6. What do you think they were thinking about Jesus asking them who people and they thought he was?
7. Do you desire intimacy with God? Do you think you can have intimacy with God without having intimacy with yourself?
8. What does this feast or the Gospel stir up within you? What would you like to say to God about whatever arises within you?

The Gospel background and reflection questions are written by Fr. Paul Gallagher, OFM. They are edited by Sister Anne Marie Lom, OSF and Joe Thiel. The excerpts from the Sunday readings are prepared by Joe Thiel. To be added to the distribution list, send your name and email address to annemarie.lom@gmail.com

Our Gospel Reflections are hosted by the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity. Their homepage is <https://fscs-calledtobe.org/>. One link there is labeled Franciscan Gospel Reflections. A click on the icon will take you to the Gospel reflections for the upcoming Sunday. By following this link, you will be able to blog or comment on the reflection questions. The material will be posted on Fridays and will be available until the following Friday when the new material is posted.

Excerpts from the Lectionary for Mass for Use in the Dioceses of the United States of America, second typical edition © 2001, 1998, 1997, 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Inc., Washington, DC. Used with permission. All rights reserved. No portion of this text may be reproduced by any means without permission in writing from the copyright owner.

Please include this information when printing or forwarding.

Excerpts from the readings for June 29, 2005, Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul, Mass during the Day

In those days, King Herod laid hands upon some members of the Church to harm them. He had James, the brother of John, killed by the sword, and when he saw that this was pleasing to the Jews he proceeded to arrest Peter also. –It was the feast of Unleavened Bread. – He had him taken into custody and put in prison under the guard of four squads of four soldiers each. He intended to bring him before the people after Passover. Peter thus was being kept in prison, but prayer by the Church was fervently being made to God on his behalf. On the very night before Herod was to bring him to trial, Peter, secured by double chains, was sleeping between two soldiers, while outside the door guards kept watch on the prison. Suddenly the angel of the Lord stood by him and a light shone in the cell. He tapped Peter on the side and awakened him, saying, “Get up quickly.” The chains fell from his wrists. The angel said to him, “Put on your belt and your sandals.” He did so. Then he said to him, “Put on your cloak and follow me.” So he followed him out, not realizing that what was happening through the angel was real; he thought he was seeing a vision. They passed the first guard, then the second, and came to the iron gate leading out to the city, which opened for them by itself. They emerged and made their way down an alley, and suddenly the angel left him. Then Peter recovered his senses and said, “Now I know for certain that the Lord sent his angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people had been expecting.”

The angel of the Lord will rescue those who fear him.
I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall be ever in my mouth. Let my soul glory in the Lord;
the lowly will hear me and be glad. Glorify the Lord with me, let us together extol his name.
I sought the Lord, and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears.
Look to him that you may be radiant with joy, and your faces may not blush with shame.
When the poor one called out, the Lord heard, and from all his distress he saved him.
Taste and see how good the Lord is; blessed the man who takes refuge in him.

I, Paul, am already being poured out like a libation, and the time of my departure is at hand.
I have competed well; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith. From now on the crown of
righteousness awaits me, which the Lord, the just judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to

me, but to all who have longed for his appearance. The Lord stood by me and gave me strength, so that through me the proclamation might be completed and all the Gentiles might hear it. And I was rescued from the lion's mouth. The Lord will rescue me from every evil threat and will bring me safe to his heavenly Kingdom. To him be glory forever and ever. Amen.

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."

Excerpts from Acts 12:1-11; Psalm 34:2-9; 2 Timothy 4:6-8, 17-18; and Matthew 16:13-19

Friends,

Here are the Gospel background and reflection questions for June 29th, the feast of Saints Peter and Paul, as prepared by Franciscan spiritual director Fr. Paul Gallagher. The Gospel from Matthew has the story of Jesus asking the disciples, "Who do you say that I am?" and Simon Peter responding, "You are the Christ. "At this, Jesus says, "You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church. I will give you the keys to the Kingdom of heaven."

The other readings also have references to both Peter and Paul, rescues for each, angels, and God-given strength. In the first reading from the Acts of the Apostles, Peter at first thinks he is seeing a vision when an angel releases him from double chains in a prison at night, and guides him from between two soldiers and past two other guards, to out beyond the iron prison gate. It is then that Peter acknowledges, "The Lord sent his angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod." Psalm 34 proclaims, "The angel of the Lord will rescue those who fear him; blessed the man who takes refuge in him. I sought the Lord, and he answered me." In the second reading, from his second letter to Timothy, Paul writes, "The Lord stood by me and gave me strength, so that through me the proclamation might be completed. And I was rescued from the lion's mouth. The Lord will rescue me from every evil threat and bring me safe to his heavenly Kingdom."

When the date for the feast of Saints Peter and Paul falls on a Sunday, their feast is celebrated on what would otherwise be a numbered Sunday of Ordinary Time. For the Feast, there is no shortage of potential material in the Gospels, Acts, and Letters to commemorate these two saints, the major contributors to the growth of the early Church. In the selected Gospel, Jesus gives Peter the opportunity to declare what is made known to him by God himself, that Jesus is the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of God. The event in the first reading from Acts occurs years after that conversation described in Gospel. Fervent prayers to God by people who Peter had brought to the Lord result in God sending an angel to deliver Peter from the grasp of Herod. The reading from Paul's letter to Timothy was written late in Paul's life, after his travels to bring the word of God to not only God's chosen people, the Jews, but especially to the rest of God's people everywhere too. The crown of righteousness which the Lord will award "awaits all who have longed for his appearance," through the proclamations of God's Kingdom that Peter and Paul have delivered.

Joe

> i < May the Word light your way each day!