

St Pius & St Anthony Sts Peter & Paul Feast Sunday Year C(2025) Luke

Sts Peter and Paul! This is a saints' **double header**! Two in one day and **both**, are **heads** of the Church in their own way! We celebrate two saints' lives and their exemplary holiness in following Christ. Two unique leaders of faith, Peter tending to the house of the church and its maintenance as Pope, and Paul as world traveling missionary drawing in more and more souls adding to the assembly of the Body of Christ. Yet, both leaders work together in Christ's service!

Reminds me of the story I heard about the Pope traveling once to America to address the United Nations- as head of Vatican City-State (they all do at one or another, or several times). So, the Pope was picked up at the hotel by a courtesy limo, and on the way there, the limo driver realized he didn't have the proper credential papers for parking in the secure underground garage, so he needed to stop at local NYPD outpost to send advance word clearing them through the gate. The driver got out, and it was taking a long time. The Pope knew how tight the schedule was, his speaking time was closing in. He was getting antsy. Still sitting there a little later, and the Pope thought, "I've got to go." So he slipped up front into driver's seat and took off to get to UN building. Well, how much does a Pope ever drive? So, it wasn't but a couple blocks until blue lights flash on behind him. He pulls over and one of the two officers approach the driver window, look in, and without exchanging any words, he steps back shocked, and walks back toward the police car. His partner, surprised at this, remarks quickly, "Tom, what's up? You look scared white as a sheet, who'd you pull over?" And the officer said, "I don't know, but He's got the Pope driving him?" God? We can hope that the Pope's words in his address at the UN had as much an effect!

Yet today we have a double blessing, to celebrate the unique lives of both Peter and Paul. Their models of discipleship so perfectly complement each other! Yet, why them today? I love our Catholic liturgical calendar, to mark our time as special and progress through the days, weeks and months of our year, always having special observances to celebrate. And having a special days' calendar isn't unique to Catholics? Every family and group has its own holy days? Families have birthdays, anniversaries, memorials unique to it. Our country has its special observances, like recently Memorial Day, Flag day, Juneteenth, or this week the 4th - Independence Day for us, or like Mexico having it Independence Day from Spain, September 16, El Grito de Dolores or Cinco de Mayo, independence from France!

So, our liturgical calendar helps us learn or keep familiar with our faith, by marking history, foundational figures, or principles of our belief. Review some time for yourself, our calendar and see that nearly every day presents something for us to mark, and be reminded of, to celebrate about our faith (*I know I say it a lot – but we Catholics are a party waiting to happen, just look at our calendar - there's always something of our faith to celebrate*)!

And some days we have two or more things to celebrate! That's today – Peter and Paul! Why those two together? Well, they both are foundational figures in the earliest church of ours, leading and holding together the flock of Christ as Pastors-Shepherds. Peter staying close more at home in **Rome**, and Paul on the Way, '**roming**' the known world over, create and shaping extensions of the Church of Christ everywhere through additional faith communities established – all in communion with one another (*One Lord, One Baptism, One Faith, one God and Father of us all*" -- Eph 4:5-6) Both Peter and Paul end up martyred and are buried in Rome, during the same period of fierce Christian persecution of Nero (year 64 or closely following +-2?). Rome becomes so pivotal as the new spiritual center of the world for Christians after the complete destruction of the Temple & Jerusalem in 70 AD. So, church's missionary expansionism the world over, (as Jesus commanded, in Matt 28:19--*Go baptize & teach all nations.....*"), Christian Faith becomes centered-grounded in Rome - burial place of these foundational figures and so many other faithful Christians martyred & laid to rest there-all roads lead to Rome! Yet, also the ministry styles of Peter and Paul wonderfully complement one another. Again, I see Peter as the home field shepherd and organizational manager – notice Jesus entrusted him with the symbol of keys (Matt 16:19). We know whoever holds the keys gets us into and around the building (there's OT precedent for this 'key' leading position, in the case of King David naming Eliakim to manage headquarters-palace in Isaiah 22- as 'keyholding' prime minister). Keys symbolize authority. So, if Peter keeps the home fires lit, Paul becomes the leading outward edge of the church as it grows and multiplies additional followers of Christ **all over the world**. I know it's a simple, and maybe silly example, but straight forward example of how these two worked together, but we could say that Paul hits the roads wearing the promotional 'sandwich boards' of his ministry in letters, "Eat at Joes", and Peter keeps the table set to feed everyone coming in. Again, I grant that is overly simplistic. Peter did his own share of missionary outreach journeying, and Paul also did his share of church maintenance as seen by his letters and their pastor's concern for maintaining the unity and harmony of Christ's Church. But Peter and Paul are a collaborative pair! In Galatians 2:7-9 Paul writes of he and Peter sharing in hands of fellowship, complementary in their missions for Christ, "I Paul, had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter to the circumcised- the same one (God) working in each of us" (Gal 2:7). And in Peter's second letter (2 Peter 3:15), Peter says "Our beloved brother Paul in his writings, instructs.....". They work together in Christ!

And that is the message for me with this special feast: quoting 1 Corinthians 12:4-6 *"There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord; there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone"* And also in the letter to

the Romans 12:5-8 “*we, though many, are one body in Christ and individually parts of one another. Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us exercise them.....*”

All our gifts are meant for the building up of the body of Christ (Eph 4:12) So, on this feast of our church, the church we are all a part of, we need to ask ourselves, what is my gift and how am I offering it to the service of Christ and His people-His Body? And each of us is unique, God knows, and God has specially given to each a gift for His Glory. St Paul goes on to talk about parts of the body, we are not all eyes, not all hands. If we were, how would anything get done (think of the saying when we fumble around –‘oh I’m all thumbs today’-such exact sameness doesn’t go far!) so, we all have different gifts to offer. And gifts come in all sizes, some large gifts, some small gifts, but all are necessary! (Jesus said that ‘Even faith the size of a mustard seed, moves mountains..... Lk 17:6) So, on this feast of two very different but united saints, we ask ourselves, “What is the offering I make to Christ for the building up of His Body?”

Other examples of Saintly Prayer Partnering, or Double Saint-Feast Days

Some apostles:

Sts. Philip and James— May 3

Sts. Simon and Jude— Oct. 28

St Paul’s coworker team:

Sts. Timothy and Titus— Jan. 26

Familial Brothers

Sts. Cyril and Methodius— Feb. 14

Sts. Nereus and Achilleus— May 12

Sts. Cosmas and Damian— Sept. 26

Spouses

Sts. Joachim and Anne— July 26

Holy Family- Mary and Joseph -- Sunday after Christmas

Saints Louis and Zélie Martin --July 12 (parents of Little Flower Therese)

Close Co-martyrs

Sts. Perpetua and Felicity— March 7 (both pregnant)

Close Co-workers

Sts. Basil the Great and Gregory Nazianzen— Jan. 2 (both teachers)