

Homily of Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul, 2025

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

The stories of these two great saints are very familiar. Their stories are stories of hope to each one of us. Considering their former life story, no one would have expected Peter or Paul to become saints and pillars and foundational figures of the Catholic Church and Christianity.

St. Peter was called Simon until Jesus changed his name. “Jesus looked at him and said, ‘You are Simon, the son of John; you will be called Cephas’” (which is translated Peter) (John 1:42). He was a common fisherman until Jesus called him. Despite his spontaneity, sometimes to a fault, Jesus kept Peter close to himself. At a point, Jesus castigated Peter to the extent of calling him “Satan.” (Matthew 16:23).

To crown his weaknesses, after Peter’s failed attempt to defend Jesus during Jesus’ arrest, he deserted Jesus. He then reappeared during Jesus’ trial only to deny him. What a ‘divided personality’? How could Jesus still trust such a man and not withdraw his promise to him? As we read in today’s gospel, Jesus said to Peter, “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” (Matthew 18:18). He became the apostle to the Jews and the first pope. That is why the Catholic Church uses the term “The Chair of Peter” to represent the papacy, the unbroken line of succession of popes throughout the Church’s history, and the Pope’s role as the shepherd of the Universal Church.

St. Paul, who used to be known as Saul, before his conversion, did everything he could to destroy Christianity. He approved Stephen’s execution (the first Christian martyr). He entered house after house, dragging out men and women who were Christians and handed them over for imprisonment (Acts 8:1, 3). Then, he headed off to Damascus to find more Christians to bring them back to Jerusalem in chains. Jesus met him on the way and struck him blind. Ironically, he was led by the hand to Damascus. Ananias prayed over him, and things like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. He was baptized, and he became a new creature and God’s chosen instrument. Right there in Damascus and at once, he began to proclaim in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God (Acts 9:1-22). He became the apostle to the Gentiles, the greatest evangelizer, and the most influential missionary in Christian history. Thirteen Epistles in the New Testament were either written by him or his disciples.

If St. Peter and St. Paul could transform from their former lives, there is hope for everyone and for every situation if we give God the chance and if we stop resisting. In the second reading, St. Paul testifies that the Lord stood by him and gave him strength. God does the same to anyone who says “Yes” to him.

St. Paul summarizes how God rescued him from dangerous situations: "I was rescued from the lion's mouth." St. Paul recounts in 2 Corinthians 11:24-28 the various dangers from which God rescued him.

The first reading tells us the story of the dramatic rescue of St. Peter from Herod.

"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" (Acts 12:4-12).

What God's call are we resisting to say "Yes" to? May Sts. Peter and Paul intercede for us that we have the courage to say "Yes."

What sins, weaknesses, and areas of our lives that resist transformation? May Sts. Peter and Paul intercede for us to have the courage to transform.

What situations do we need positive changes? May Sts. Peter and Paul intercede for us that we may experience the positive changes we are longing, desiring, and praying for.

What fears, anxieties, challenges, and dangers are we encountering? May Sts. Peter and Paul intercede for us that the Lord's angel rescues us.

What difficulties, helpless, and seemingly hopeless cases facing us? May Sts. Peter and Paul intercede for us for God's divine intervention.

We commit persecuted Christians and peoples all over the world to the intercession Sts. Peter and Paul.

We commit the conversion of prodigals and criminals to the intercession of Sts. Peter and Paul.

Jesus did not give up on St. Peter, for his weaknesses, or on St. Paul for his murderous actions. Therefore, let us not give up on ourselves or on someone else or some situation. Let us continue to press forward in fervent prayer that God's will may prevail. Amen.

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