

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.

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you, we bless you, we adore you, we glorify you, we give you thanks for your great glory, Lord God, heavenly King, O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son, Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us; you take away the sins of the world, receive our prayer; you are seated at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

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

Ac 12:1-11

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles King Herod started persecuting certain members of the Church. He beheaded James the brother of John, and when he saw that this pleased the Jews he decided to arrest Peter as well. This was during the days of Unleavened Bread, and he put Peter in prison, assigning four squads of four soldiers each to guard him in turns. Herod meant to try Peter in public after the end of Passover week. All the time Peter was under guard the Church prayed to God for him unremittingly.

On the night before Herod was to try him, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, fastened with double chains, while guards kept watch at the main entrance to the prison. Then suddenly the angel of the Lord stood there, and the cell was filled with light. He tapped Peter on the side and woke him. 'Get up!' he said 'Hurry!' – and the chains fell from his hands. The angel then said, 'Put on your belt and sandals.' After he had done this, the angel next said, 'Wrap your cloak round you and follow me.' Peter followed him, but had no idea that what the angel did was all happening in reality; he thought he was seeing a vision. They passed through two guard posts one after the other, and reached the iron gate leading to the city. This opened of its own accord; they went through it and had walked the whole length of one street when suddenly the angel left him. It was only then that Peter came to himself. 'Now

I know it is all true' he said. 'The Lord really did send his angel and has saved me from Herod and from all that the Jewish people were so certain would happen to me.'

The word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Ps 33 (34):2-9

Response:

From all my terrors the Lord set me free.

Or: The angel of the Lord rescues those who revere him.

1. I will bless the Lord at all times, his praise always on my lips; 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 poor man called, the Lord heard him and rescued him from all his distress. (R.)
4. The angel of the Lord is encamped around those who revere him, to rescue them. Taste and see that the Lord is good. He is happy who seeks refuge in him. (R.)

SECOND READING

2 Tim 4:6-8, 17-18

A reading from the second letter of St Paul to Timothy My life is already being poured away as a libation, and the time has come for me to be gone. I have fought the good fight to the end; I have run the race to the finish; I have kept the faith; all there is to come now is the crown of righteousness reserved for me, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give to me on that Day; and not only to me but to all those who have longed for his Appearing. The Lord stood by me and gave me power, so that through me the whole message might be proclaimed for all the pagans to hear; and so I was rescued from the lion's mouth. The Lord will rescue me from all evil attempts on me, and bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

The word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia! You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church. And the gates of the underworld can never hold out against it. Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Mt 16:13-19

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi he put this question to his disciples, 'Who do people say the Son of Man is?' And they said, 'Some say he is John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' 'But you,' he said 'who do you say I am?' Then Simon Peter spoke up, 'You are the Christ,' he said 'the Son of the living God.' Jesus replied, 'Simon son of Jonah, you are a happy man! Because it was not flesh and blood that revealed this to you but my Father in heaven. So I now say to you: You are Peter and on this rock I will build my Church. And the gates of the

underworld can never hold out against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven: whatever you bind on earth shall be considered bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth shall be considered loosed in heaven.

The Gospel of the Lord. Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father; through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven,

(all bow during the next three lines)

and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried, and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

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.

# Sunday Message

THE WORD

## TWO GREAT MARTYRS

MT 16:13-19



Jesus has been going around curing the sick 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 shared a martyr's death. 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 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 done), 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 it and accept it. ■