

June 29, 2025 Portugal Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul, Apostles, Mass during the Day
The Chapel of San Miguel de los Santos in Barcelona, Spain
Father Juan and Deacon Roger (homily)

Reading I, Acts 12:1-11

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."

Responsorial Psalm 34:2-3, 4-5, 6-7, 8-9

R. (5) 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.

R. The angel of the Lord will rescue those who fear him.

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.

R. The angel of the Lord will rescue those who fear him.

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.

R. The angel of the Lord will rescue those who fear him.

The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them. Taste and see how good the LORD is; blessed the man who takes refuge in him.

R. The angel of the Lord will rescue those who fear him.

Reading II 2 Timothy 4:6-8, 17-18

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.

Gospel Matthew 16:13-19

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.”

Today we are celebrating the two great apostles who had a lot in common, yet were completely different in temperament, education, professional upbringing, and church role.

Both Peter and Paul had experienced several miracles of rescue. In today's 1st reading, we see how Peter was rescued from Herod's imprisonment as earnest prayers were made for him by the Church at Jerusalem. In the 2nd reading we see Paul's own testimonies too. For us on this Pilgrimage, it is interesting to note that between 62 and 65 AD, Paul brought the Gospel to Spain, which was his stated intention in his letter to the Romans. In the final analysis, both apostles experienced horrific martyrdom; Peter was crucified in Rome upside down, and Paul was beheaded in Rome, a death more suitable for a Roman citizen...both were killed by Nero.

I remember in 2004 when we visited Rome for our son and daughter-in-law's wedding. I discovered what it means to determine God's will in our lives and how sometimes even when we are very self-absorbed how God grabs our attention. On a tour of Christian Rome when we were visiting the great Basilicas and on our way to the Catacombs, I asked our guide if we could visit "the chapel of Quo Vadis". He said it wasn't much of a church to see, but immediately understood when I explained that I was a Deacon in the Catholic Church. The church is a small chapel-size Church dating back 1200 years on the old Appian Way...near the St. Sebastian and St. Calysta catacombs. It is built on the spot where Peter had a vision of Jesus when he was fleeing for his life from Nero. Peter said to Jesus "domine, quo vadis?" or "Lord, where are you going?" Legend has it that Jesus replied, "*I am returning to Rome to be crucified again.*" With that Peter knew what he had to do, he embraced death and returned to Rome to lead, and be led where he didn't want to go. In the Church there are paintings on either side of the altar. On the right a painting of Christ crucified. On the left, one of St. Peter crucified upside down. He demanded to be crucified this way, because he didn't feel worthy to be crucified the same way as Jesus.

On this Sunday, may we follow the great apostles, Sts. Peter and Paul, because they are examples of how to embrace God's will in our lives. And, they show us what a blessing we have been given to be on this pilgrimage. And the Church says, Amen!