

Jesus builds on two giants

Feast of Sts. Peter and Paul (13th Sunday of the Year, June 29): (R3) Matthew 16:13-19; (R1) Acts 12:1-11; (R2) 2 Timothy 4:6-8, 17-18.

Next Sunday we celebrate the Feast of Sts. Peter and Paul. St. Mark ends the first half of his Gospel with a triumphant climax. He has recorded doubt, misunderstanding and the opposition of many to Jesus. Now Peter makes his great confession of faith: "You are the Messiah."

In the New Testament Peter is clearly shown as the leader of the Apostles, chosen by Jesus to have a special relationship with him. With James and John, he was privileged to witness the Transfiguration, the raising of a dead child to life and the agony in Gethsemani. His mother-in-law was cured by Jesus. He is sent with John to prepare for the last Passover before Jesus' death. His name is first on every list of the Apostles.

And to him only it was said, "Blessed are you Simon. ... You are rock and on this rock I will build my church. ... I will entrust to you the keys of the kingdom of heaven."

The Gospels prove their veracity by the details they include about Peter. It is a great comfort for ordinary mortals to know that Peter also had his human weaknesses even in the presence of Jesus.

He had given up all things, yet he could ask, in childish self-regard, "What are we going to get for all this?" He receives the full force of Christ's anger when he objects to the idea of a suffering Messiah: "Get out of my sight, you Satan, you enemy! You are trying to make me trip and fall! You are not judging by God's standards, but by man's."

Peter was willing to accept Jesus' doctrine of forgiveness, but suggested a limit of seven times. He walks on the water in faith, but sinks in doubt. He refuses to let Jesus wash his feet, then wants him to wash his whole body. He swore at the Last Supper that he would never deny Jesus, and then swore to a



Father Albert Shamon

A word for Sunday

maidservant that he had never known the man. He loyally resisted the first attempt to arrest Jesus by cutting off Malchus' ear, but in the end he ran away with the others. In the depth of his sorrow, Jesus looked on him and forgave him, and he went out and shed bitter tears.

Always linked with Peter is the apostle Paul. Peter is the apostle of God's chosen people; Paul is the apostle of the Gentiles. In the beginning Paul was the most Pharisaic of Pharisees, the most legalistic of Mosaic lawyers.

His experience of the personal risen Jesus on the road to Damascus was the driving force that made him one of the most zealous, dynamic and courageous ambassadors of Christ the church has ever had. Persecution and humiliation, the day-to-day carrying of the cross made him a great saint. The dying Christ was in him; the living Christ was his life.

It is ironic, perhaps, that after a lifetime of suffering for Christ at the hands of his fellow Jews, and working for the conversion of the Gentiles, that he should be martyred at the hands of a Gentile power, the Roman Emperor Nero.

Paul did his best to unify Jews and Gentiles. One of his greatest gestures was the collection he took up among the Gentile churches to aid the poor mother church in

Jerusalem, the Jewish Christians. He was the instrument Christ used to save Christianity from slavery to the Law as a means of salvation, and to enrich the newly engrafted Gentile branches with the precious heritage of the Jews.

Paul suffered much for the faith. "Five times," he said, "I received forty lashes less one at the hands of the Jews. Three times I was beaten with rods. I was stoned once; shipwrecked three times; I passed a day and a night on the sea. I traveled continually endangered by floods, robbers, my own people, the Gentiles. I endured labor, hardships, many sleepless nights. I hungered and thirsted, frequently fasted, suffered cold and nakedness. ... But I am content with weakness, with mistreatment, with distress, with persecution and difficulties of the sake of Christ; for when I am powerless, then I am strong" (2 Cor. 11:24-27; 12:10).

On these two giants, Peter and Paul, Jesus built his church.

Father Shamon is administrator of St. Isaac Jogues Chapel, Fleming.

Daily Readings

Monday, June 30
Genesis 18:16-33;
Psalms 103:1-4, 8-11;
Matthew 8:18-22

Tuesday, July 1
Genesis 19:15-29;
Psalms 26:2-3, 9-12;
Matthew 8:23-27

Wednesday, July 2
Genesis 21:5, 8-20;
Psalms 34:7-8, 10-13;
Matthew 8:28-34

Thursday, July 3
Ephesians 2:19-22;
Psalms 117:1-2;
John 20:24-29

Friday, July 4
Genesis 23:1-4, 19;
24:1-8, 62-67;
Psalms 106:1-5;
Matthew 9:9-13

Saturday, July 5
Genesis 27:1-5, 15-29;
Psalms 135:1-6;
Matthew 9:14-17

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