

## **Solemnity of Peter and Paul -June 29, 2025: “The Rock, the Sword and us!”**

Today we celebrate two giants of our faith, two men who couldn't be more different: Peter, the fisherman—impulsive, sometimes doubtful, but full of heart. And Paul, the persecutor of Christians—intense, but radically converted. One became the rock, the other, the tireless Apostles of Gentiles with the ‘Sword of the Spirit’. To both, we owe especially the spread of Christianity from its inception in Calvary. So, what do these two men, who lived 2,000 years ago, have to do with our lives in 2025? More than what we might think.

**Peter: The vulnerable:** In our Gospel today, Jesus asks his disciples, “Who do you say that I am?” It’s not a trivia question. It’s the question of life. Simon gets it right: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” (Mtt. 16:16). And Jesus gives him a new name and a new mission: “You are Peter-Rock, and upon this rock I will build my church.” Peter was not a perfect man. He would deny Jesus three times. Yet, Christ chose him. Why? Because his faith, though imperfect, was real. Pope Benedict XVI once reminded us of this, saying, “The Lord made the Church... with poor men, with sinners... he made it with us.”

History is filled with stories of leaders chosen despite their apparent flaws, whose very imperfections, when submitted to a greater purpose, became strengths. -Think of Moses, stuttering and insecure, chosen to lead Israel out of slavery. Or consider Abraham Lincoln, often plagued by self-doubt and melancholy, who nonetheless steered the United States through its most divisive war.

Just as God used their human weaknesses for divine purposes, so too did He use Peter. Tradition tells us that Peter, in his humility, requested to be crucified upside down, feeling unworthy to die in the same manner as his Lord. This act, born of his persistent awareness of his failings and profound love for Christ, solidified his witness.

This is our first takeaway: Your weakness doesn't disqualify you. It qualifies you for God's mercy. Like Peter, we are called not because we are strong, but because **He** is strong in us.

### **Paul: The Transformed Missionary**

In our second reading, he reflects on his life's work, saying, “I have competed well; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith.” (2 Tim 4:7). This is the man who went from persecuting Christians to becoming their greatest champion.

What drove him? A profound encounter with Jesus that changed everything. Pope Francis speaks to this very point when he says, “Being a Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction.”

Paul’s transformation was so dramatic, it sent shockwaves through the early Christian community. Imagine the surprise and skepticism when Saul, the zealous persecutor, suddenly proclaimed Christ! It wasn’t an intellectual conversion that led him to Damascus, but a blinding, personal encounter with the Risen Lord. And from that moment on, his life became a testament to that encounter. He endured rejection, beatings, imprisonment, and countless dangers, all for the sake of the Gospel. His famous travels, meticulously documented in the Acts of the Apostles, demonstrate an unparalleled zeal that could only come from a deep, personal relationship with Christ, not merely a set of beliefs. (Paul says: Who can separate me from the love of Christ?)

Our call today? So, we have the Rock and the Sword. Peter and Paul. They show us the way and give us an example. Peter provides the firm foundation, and Paul takes that faith and boldly carries it into the world. They are the two lungs of the Church, and we need both.

**-Be a Peter:** be a rock of faith in your own small way. Show up. Be dependable. Be someone, others can count on, even with all your imperfections. You just have to be able to say, **“He is the Son of the living God.”**

**-Be a Paul:** seek your own personal encounter with Jesus. Then let that relationship overflow into how you live, the joy you have, and the hope you offer to a world that desperately needs it. Finish your race. Run with perseverance the course God has set for you.

Brothers and sisters, the Church was built on weak, passionate, and forgiven men who followed Christ, who fulfilled His Will, and became saints. And it is sustained by people just like them—and just like you and me.

Let us ask Saints Peter and Paul to pray for us, that even with our imperfections, we may strive daily to follow and love Christ and that we may have Peter’s solid faith and Paul’s tireless zeal in spreading the faith. Amen. Happy Feast Day!