

2019 Sts. Peter and Paul

1. **Did you notice that the feast following Sts. Peter and Paul is the Feast of the First Roman Martyrs of the Roman Church?** Yesterday was the Feast of St. Irenaeus, the great theologian of the early Church who championed **the unity of the Church**. The joy of belonging to the Roman Church, founded upon the faith of the Apostles Peter and Paul, springs from **the acceptance of God's plan for the Jews and the Gentiles to be one family**.

2. **When Peter was cross-questioned** by the brethren in Jerusalem about eating with the family of the Centurion Cornelius, he answered, "If then God gave the same gift to them [Gentiles] as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?" When they heard this they were silenced. And they glorified God, saying, "**Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance unto life.**" (Acts 11:17-18)

3. **Paul would boldly preach**, "For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and bestows his riches upon all who call upon him. For, **"everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved."**" (Rom 10:12-13)

4. **This Solemnity captures the hidden plan of God under the banner of these two great Apostles**. Peter established the faith among the Jews and Paul among the Gentiles. One looked to laying the foundations of the Church on the solid bedrock of the Old Testament and the Gospel, the other

consolidated these foundations, showing how to live our new life in Christ. **Is not this hidden plan our mission too?**

5. **Both died martyrs for Christ in Rome**. In the year, 258 AD, under the emperor Valerian the cemeteries of Rome were confiscated by the State. In that same year on June 29, the relics of both these martyrs were removed from their sepulchres and hidden in the catacombs. June 29 remained etched in the memory of the Roman Church for this reason. **Perhaps no other basilicas in Rome are visited by the feet of the pilgrims so much as the two basilicas of Sts. Peter and Paul**.

6. **Both these great Apostles served Jesus Christ and his plan of unity in spite of their weakness and failures**, Peter's denial and Paul's blind persecution of the Christians. Jesus still went out to them and entrusted to them his plan of unity for the whole Church. **Why do your failures and mistakes discourage you?**

7. **Both these Apostles underwent a deep conversion which convinced them of the closeness of the Risen Lord to them**. Peter is in awe: "The Lord really did send his angel and saved me from Herod and from all that the Jewish people were so certain would happen to me." Paul utters his quiet certainty: "The Lord will rescue me from all evil attempts on me, and bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom." **Where is the Risen Christ in your conversion?**

8. **From both Jesus asked a personal confession of faith**: "Who do you say that I am? You are the Christ the Son of the

living God?” (Mt 16:15-16) “Saul, Saul! Why are you persecuting me? Who are you Lord? The Good News I preached is not a human message that I was given by men, it is something I learned only through revelation of Jesus Christ” (Acts 9:5 and Galatians 1:11). **Have you made your personal act of confession in Jesus?**

9. Both pastured the flock entrusted to them to the end. “I have fought the good fight to the end” says Paul. Peter, we know by tradition, asked to be crucified upside down as being unworthy to be crucified like his Lord. It was his extra mile.

Are you afraid of the extra mile that Jesus asks of you?

10. **All this puts into relief our own task as Roman Christians who have a special part to play in the plan of God.**

- **The work of unity begins** with our personal conversion to Christ and our confession of him and of his plan.
- **The work of unity does not stop** because of our failures and weaknesses and setbacks.
- **The work of unity is an essential part of evangelization**, bringing Jews and Gentiles together into one Body under the Roman Pontiff.
- **The joy and privilege of belonging to the Roman Catholic Church** lies not just in taking this work seriously and personally like Sts. Peter and Paul but rejoicing to see others enter the true Church of God.

11. We pray in the 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 the teaching of the Apostles, we may be one heart and one soul, made steadfast in your love.

Unity and love is the ultimate sign of the conversion of the world. Amen.