



ST. PETER AND ST. PAUL

Homily of the Right Reverend Dom Jean PATEAU
Abbot of Our Lady of Fontgombault
(Fontgombault, June 29th, 2026)

Quem me esse dicitis?
Who do you say that I am?
(Mt 16:15)

Dear Brothers and Sisters,
My dearly beloved Sons,

WHILE THE READINGS from the Acts of the Apostles and the Gospel according to St. Matthew mention only the apostle St. Peter, the Collect of the Mass reminds us that the Church celebrates on this day the two apostles Peter and Paul, pillars of the Church. More specifically, it invites us to “follow in all things the teachings of those who brought the first-fruits of the faith.”

St. Augustine, applying to the Church the first verse of Psalm 86: “The foundations thereof are the holy mountains. The Lord loveth the gates of Zion,” evokes the apostles:

Why are the apostles and prophets foundations? Because their authority is the support of our weakness. Why are they gates? because through them we enter the kingdom of God: for they proclaim it to us: and while we enter by their means, we enter also through Christ, Himself being the Gate. [...] The Church was destined to prevail throughout the whole world: whence

this edifice is styled a building together into Christ. [...] On every side is the Church called in the Trinity.^a

The apostles are therefore the foundations of our faith in the testimony they bear to “Christ, the Son of the living God.” They are the architects of our communion with Christ.

Today, this responsibility falls primarily to the bishops, successors of the apostles. Addressing the bishops of Spain, Pope Leo taught:

It is the Lord who leads us; He is the master of history and of each of our stories. He determines the rhythm. We walk behind Him; indeed, we walk with Him as members of one body. This profound bond demands of the Church, in this time of increasingly drastic polarizations and oppositions, a witness to unity in diversity: a communion capable of embracing the richness of the gifts, charisms and sensibilities that the Holy Spirit stirs up in the people of God. The image of Christ is made visible in the living mosaic of the Church, where many tiles, without blending together, converge to reveal the beauty of the one Lord.

In this task, the ministry of the bishop takes on a particular significance. We are called to be a visible sign of communion: first and foremost, of communion with Christ, lovingly safeguarding the faith we have received, in docility to the Word of God and to the living Tradition of the Church. Secondly, in communion with the Successor of Peter and with the universal Church, with the presbyterate and with the diocesan community itself, with consecrated life, with movements, with associations, and with every authentic charism that the Spirit bestows for the common good. [...]

Communion lived in this way also brings about missionary vitality. A Church that is interiorly at peace can speak more freely to brothers and sisters of other Christian denominations and other religions, to those who do not believe, to civil authorities, and to all people of good will who work for the common good.

This is a somewhat extensive quote, but the present context called for keeping the entire text.

The apostles and bishops are the architects of our communion in Christ within the Church. Let us therefore meditate on the example offered to us by the saints we celebrate today, on the path they had to travel.

What do a fisherman from the Sea of Galilee and a Roman centurion have in common? What do they have in common, except that both burned with an ardent desire: to defend God.

We don't know much about Peter. From his very first encounter with Jesus, he receives a new name: "'Thou art Simon the son of Jona. Thou shalt be called Cephas,' which is interpreted Peter."^b Then comes the miraculous catch of fish and the final calling of the disciples: "Come ye after Me, and I will make you to be fishers of men."^c

b. Jn 1:42.

c. Mt 4:19.

Full of self-confidence, Peter devoted himself zealously to Christ, even intervening in a misplaced way when Jesus did not seem to fit his preconceived notion of the Messiah. In Caesarea, Peter had confessed: "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God."^d But when Christ spoke of the prospect of his Passion, Peter's ideas were no longer attuned to Christ's: "God forbid, Lord! This shall never happen to Thee."^e

d. Mt 16:16.

e. Mt 16:22.

Let us listen to St. Paul in the Temple of Jerusalem:

I am a Jew, born at Tarsus in Cilicia. [...] I was taught according to the truth of the law of the fathers, zealous for the law.^f

f. Acts 22:3.

On the evening of Holy Thursday Peter betrayed Jesus, and later Paul persecuted the fledgling Church. Peter and Paul lacked nothing, except having encountered Christ the Saviour. Before defending God, if indeed that is man's role, before bearing witness, we must allow ourselves to be saved by Christ. We must let Him into our lives.

That is what Paul wrote to the Romans:

We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through Him we have obtained by faith access to this grace in which we stand.^g

g. Rm 5:1-2.

Let us listen to St. Augustine speaking about St. Peter:

For the needful order was that Christ should first die for Peter's salvation, and then that Peter should die for the preaching of Christ. [...] Peter thought to lay down his life for Christ, the one to be delivered in behalf of the Deliverer, seeing that Christ had come to lay down His life for all His own, including Peter also. [...] Now thou hast cause, Peter, to be no longer afraid of death, because He liveth Whom thou didst mourn when dead, and Whom in thy carnal love thou didst try to hinder from dying in our behalf.^h

To desire communion with Christ is first and foremost to allow oneself to be saved by Him. Those who are in communion with Christ and with the Church do not view them from the outside, from the balcony, as Pope Francis put it. Members of Christ and members of the Church, they draw from the life of the body, participate in the life of the body, and suffer from its wounds.

May Our Lady, Mother of the Church and Mother of the faithful, intercede for us and lead us to her Son and to the Church.

Amen.

