

Tuesday June 29th, 2021, The Feast of Saints Peter and Paul

Good Morning from St. Bernadette's.

I hope everyone is keeping safe and well, and following all the guidance we receive to overcome these strange times, and continuing to pray for all our needs at this time.

And a beautiful morning indeed for indeed a beautiful Feast!

Just to give you a quick update on the 'daily' readings, in case you are following the plot! Abraham had pleaded for the faithful people, and in Genesis 19:15-29 Lot and the other virtuous people are allowed to leave the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah before they are destroyed. In Matthew 8:23-27, following on from the lack of commitment shown in yesterdays Gospel, today we are reminded that faith is also necessary if we are to follow Jesus. We pray for an increase in faith.

But today is the Solemnity of the Great Saints Peter, Apostle to the Jews, and Paul, Apostle to the Gentiles.

*What fairer light is this than time itself doth own,
The golden day with beams more radiant brightening?
The princes of God's Church this feast day doth enthrone,
To sinners heavenward bound their burden lightening.
One taught mankind its creed, one guards the heavenly gate,
Founders of Rome, they bind the world in loyalty;
One by the sword achieved, one by the cross his fate;
With laurelled brows they hold eternal royalty.
Rejoice, O Rome, this day, thy walls they once did sign
With princely blood, who now their glory share with thee.
What city's vesture glows with crimson deep as thine?
What beauty else has earth that may compare with thee?
To God the three in one eternal homage be,
All honour, all renown, all songs victorious,
Who rules both heaven and earth by one divine decree
To everlasting years in empire glorious.*

(A fifth century hymn translated in the eighteenth century by Monsignor Knox)

Veneration of the two great Apostles, Peter and Paul, has its roots in the very foundations of the Church, the solid rock on which the Church is built - they are at the origin of her faith and will forever

remain her protectors and her guides. To them Rome owes her true greatness, for it was under God's providential guidance that they were led to make the capital of the Empire, sanctified by their martyrdom, the centre of the Christian world from which the preaching of the Gospel could radiate. I am sure we are all familiar with the lives of Peter and Paul, as well as their martyrdoms, St. Peter suffering martyrdom under Nero, in A.D. 66 or 67. He was buried on the hill of the Vatican where excavations have revealed his tomb on the very site of the Basilica of St. Peter's. St. Paul was beheaded in the Via Ostia on the spot where now stands the basilica bearing his name. In a sermon in the year 395, St. Augustine of Hippo said of SS. Peter and Paul: *'Both apostles share the same feast day, for these two were one; and even though they suffered on different days, they were as one. Peter went first, and Paul followed. And so we celebrate this day made holy for us by the apostles' blood. Let us embrace what they believed, their life, their labours, their sufferings, their preaching, and their confession of faith.'* And Amen to that:

*O God,
you have given us this holy day
so that we may have the joy of venerating the apostles Peter and Paul,
and honouring the glorious martyrdom.
Grant that your Church,
From whom her universal life began,
instructed by their teaching and example,
and knit together in unity by your Spirit,
may ever stand firm upon the one foundation,
which is Jesus Christ our Lord;
who lives and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.*

For our Feast Day Readings we have Acts of the Apostles 12:1-11 which tell show Peter is miraculously freed from Prison, as the Lord wants him to continue his important missions of preaching, whilst in the second reading from Paul's Second Letter to Timothy 4:6-8.17-18, Paul speaks about his realization that the Lord has been with him throughout his ministry, standing by him at all times, rescuing him from evil powers, and encouraging him to 'fight the good fight.' Our Gospel, Matthew 16:13-19, gives us Peter's great profession of faith that, *'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.'* This is followed by Jesus's great bestowal upon Peter, *'You are Peter and on this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of the underworld can never hold out against it.'* Let's sing the great hymn 'For All The Saints'. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1OaBgaMcOvM>

*Almighty God,
you give us the great joy of devoting this day
to the honour of the apostles Peter and Paul.
Grant that your Church
may follow their teaching to the full,
because these are the people
who first taught us to worship you in Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.*

And just to be fair, a couple of pictures today of the Basilica's of Saint Paul and Saint Peter in Rome. The one from St. Paul's shows the relic of the chains that bound him, whilst the one from St. Peter's shows the crowd on the Wednesday Morning audience with Pope Francis – and we'd arrived at 5am and that was as close as we got (though we got much closer when he went round in the Popemobile!).

Enjoy this beautiful Feast!

And remember, St. Bernadette's is not closed. We're just doing things differently for a while, until we are allowed to gather together once more, more stronger, more faithful, more loving, more creative, and more grateful for the amazing community that is St. Bernadette's.

With love and faith in Jesus.

Fr. P.