

Saints Peter and Paul

Christ the King • June 28-29, 2008

Last week, I had the opportunity to spend some time with my Aunt and Uncle in Helena. As usual, we started talking about family members. Somehow our discussion turned to more distant relatives. My uncle began to tell stories of great, great grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins. Pretty soon I was wishing I had a family tree so that I could see where each of these 'characters' fit in our family.

Today's liturgy gives us—this family of faith—an opportunity to look at two 'characters' from our family tree of faith. We celebrate the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul. This feast day takes precedence in the liturgical calendar over what would have been the 13th Sunday in Ordinary Time.

So who are these ancestors of ours? It would probably be hard to find two individuals who differed more.

Peter was a common worker, a fisherman, a large man. He responded to Jesus' call to follow and then stumbled his way through the Lord's public life, and beyond. Peter recognized that Jesus was the Messiah and professed his faith, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God."

Peter had faith enough to walk on water, but when he thought about what he was doing, and started to sink.

We have those wonderful and terrible scenes involving Peter during the last day of Jesus' life on earth: the washing of the Feet – you will never wash my feet; His bravado, my faith will never be shaken; to denying Jesus three times.

After the resurrection he affirms his faith in Jesus three times.

Paul could not have been more different than Peter. Paul was a very educated man, a small man. He was well spoken; a prolific writer. He was a dynamo. As a Pharisee, he did everything he could to destroy the followers of Jesus. Then Jesus called Paul as he traveled to Damascus. Paul used his intelligence and determination to spread the Good news throughout the Roman Empire. Paul wrote letters to the infant churches, and completely sacrificed his life for the Kingdom of God.

Two very different saints, two very different relatives. Yet very similar – they followed Christ, no matter where it led them.

We remember them, not because we are so different, but because we are so much alike. They are our relatives. There is some of Peter and some of Paul in each of us. We can bungle through life like Peter, making great promises and then backing down where the going gets tough. How many times have we all, myself included, not stood up for the Lord so that we weren't mocked by the crowd. Sometimes we go through life like the firestorm that was Paul, convinced that our view is correct and willing to destroy anyone who disagrees with us? Like Paul before his conversion, charity can become secondary to making our point.

But like Peter and Paul we have been called by Christ; called to follow in this time and this place.

And like Peter and Paul we don't have to have all the answers, we can even make mistakes. It is alright, because Christ is with us.

So, Like Peter and Paul, we are challenged to share Christ's love with and to our family, our friends, our neighbors, our city, our state, our country, yes, and even the world.

Saint Peter and Saint Paul, our brothers in faith, pray for us!

Adapted from "St. Peter and St. Paul: Determination & Dynamism" by Fr. Joseph Pellegrino.