

Dear friends in Christ,

As we enter into these beautiful weeks of Summer, I want to invite us to get to know our new Pope, Pope Leo XIV. Over the next few weeks, I will be sharing some excerpts from homilies which he has given over the last number of weeks. Today, I offer some portions of his homily for the great feast of Saints Peter and Paul the Apostles given just last week. The Apostles have much to teach us, especially these two who gave their lives for the Gospel in Rome, the heart of the pagan empire:

*Today we celebrate two brothers in faith, Peter and Paul, whom we honour as pillars of the Church and venerate as patrons of the diocese and city of Rome.*

*The story of these two Apostles has much to say to us, the community of the Lord's disciples, as we make our pilgrim way in today's world. Upon reflection, I would like to emphasize two specific aspects of their faith: ecclesial communion and the vitality of faith.*

*First, ecclesial communion. Today's liturgy reminds us how Peter and Paul were called to share a single fate, that of martyrdom, which united them definitively to Christ. In the first reading, we see Peter in prison awaiting judgment (cf. Acts 12:1-11). In the second reading, the Apostle Paul, also in chains, tells us, in a kind of last will and testament, that his blood is about to be poured out and offered to God (cf. 2 Tim 4:6-8, 17-18). Peter and Paul were both ready to lay down their lives for the sake of the Gospel.*

*Yet this communion of the two Apostles in the one confession of faith was the conclusion of a long journey on which each embraced the faith and lived out his apostolate in his own particular way. Their brotherhood in the Spirit did not erase their different backgrounds. Simon was a fisherman from Galilee, while Saul was highly educated and a member of the party of the Pharisees. Peter immediately left everything to follow the Lord, while Paul persecuted Christians before his life-changing encounter with the risen Christ. Peter preached mainly to the Jews, whereas Paul was driven to bring the Good News to the gentiles.*

*As we know, the two were at odds over the proper way to deal with gentile converts, so much so that Paul tells us that, "when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood self-condemned" (Gal*

*2:11). At the Council of Jerusalem, the two Apostles would once more debate the issue.*

*Dear friends, the history of Peter and Paul shows us that the communion to which the Lord calls us is a unison of voices and personalities that does not eliminate anyone's freedom. Our patron saints followed different paths, had different ideas and at times argued with one another with evangelical frankness. Yet this did not prevent them from living the concordia apostolorum, that is, a living communion in the Spirit, a fruitful harmony in diversity. As Saint Augustine remarks, "the feast of the two Apostles is celebrated on one day. They too were one. For although they were martyred on different days, they were one" (Serm. 295, 7.7).*

*All this invites us to reflect on the nature of ecclesial communion. Awakened by the inspiration of the Spirit, it unites differences and builds bridges of unity thanks to the rich variety of charisms, gifts and ministries. It is important that we learn to experience communion in this way — as unity within diversity — so that the various gifts, united in the one confession of faith, may advance the preaching of the Gospel. We are called to persevere along this path, following the example of Peter and Paul, since all of us need that kind of fraternity. The whole Church needs fraternity, which must be present in all of our relationships, whether between lay people and priests, priests and bishops, bishops and the Pope. Fraternity is also needed in pastoral care, ecumenical dialogue and the friendly relations that the Church desires to maintain with the world. Let us make an effort, then, to turn our differences into a workshop of unity and communion, of fraternity and reconciliation, so that everyone in the Church, each with his or her personal history, may learn to walk side by side. POPE LEO XIV*

#### **WE WELCOME FR RAPHAEL AMBADAN**

This week we welcome Fr. Raphael Ambadan as our new Parochial Vicar. He is a priest of St Thomas Syro-Malabar Diocese of Chicago and is director of the Holy Family Syro-Malabar Mission here on the Eastside. He retains those duties and will serve as my Parochial Vicar (or associate pastor) of our family of parishes. He brings a wealth of experience, having served as a seminary professor in patristics and church history in India, and in many pastoral roles in the United States over the past 13 years. Please join me in welcoming him warmly.

Blessings on your week!

Fr. Johnson