

August 23, 2026 Homily
Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time

<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/082326.cfm>

One of the most common ideas that we all have about Peter is in relation to today's Gospel scene. The keys of God's Kingdom were given to Peter. And since then, many people believe that once we die, we will meet Peter, and that he will open the doors to those found righteous at the final judgment. But the text is good news for us in a deeper way. God the Father has given to Peter the gift of Jesus, and Peter recognizes Jesus as his Lord and Savior. To say that Jesus is the Christ is to say that, in him, God is with us. God in sandals. God with a Galilean accent. God who eats with sinners and dies with outlaws. Then, Jesus entrusts to Peter, and entrusts to us all, the authority to proclaim in this world broken by violence and hate, that He is the truth about morals and about the meaning of human life. Peter failed. Also, all of us also fail in our efforts to accept both the gift and the call. We are too, people of little faith. But St. Peter shows us that God continues choosing us for tasks that we are not ready for, like parents, teachers, doctors, nurses, priests, and God-parents... And only with God's grace, we are able to fulfill these tasks.

Peter was a man of great frailty. He betrayed the Lord Jesus. And Peter is the one chosen to open the doors of God's Kingdom. This is our mission as well: our vocation is to open the doors of God's Kingdom to everyone who seeks the truth, to those who want to join us in our efforts to imitate Christ, to those who want to establish a loving, inclusive and just society. We may not always feel up to the call. Following Jesus doesn't mean that we are free from confusion and misunderstanding. But since the grace of Baptism was given to us, our mission is to show the greatness of the Lord as we love and reach out to the desperate and the lonely, the poor and the vulnerable, immigrants and refugees, sinners and to those who have been excluded from the Church.

There are many people who need to experience the unconditional and inclusive love of God in their lives. There are many others who need to restore their faith in God. So many are in physical or emotional pain right now. We have been chosen to open the gates and let in others into God's kingdom of justice, consolation, and salvation. Peter was a man of great frailty and little faith. The Lord called him to greatness. Once he accepted the call, he became one of the great saints of the Church. We are not perfect.

We are people of little faith too. But, we are called to profess with Peter, that Jesus is the Lord of love and mercy, justice and peace, reconciliation and harmony. The rock upon which Jesus builds his congregation, his Church, is not only Peter, but all of us, who like him, have received the gift of Jesus Christ in our lives. It is by acting and loving like Christ, that we participate in his Messianic ministry in the world. It is through our actions of righteousness and love that the congregation we call "Church," will extend Jesus' loving salvation to others.

Our lack of integrity as we profess Jesus as our Savior, while we support immorality, violence, hate and exclusion and racism in our lives, is turning away the new generations from the Church. If the rock is not solid, the building collapses. If we are not people of integrity, our Church will decline. If we witness to Christ with integrity of life, we will become solid rocks for the future generations of Catholics. Christian writer, Stephen Mattson, invites us all who consider ourselves disciples, to often ask ourselves the following question: "Is my faith more a reflection of my political, cultural and socio-economic values and actions, or a reflection of the values and actions of Christ?"

The Universal Prayer
Sunday August 23rd 2026
Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time

Celebrant:

Sisters and brothers, standing humbly before the rich depths of God's wisdom and knowledge, we place these petitions in God's hands.

1. For Pope Leo, successor of St Peter, that he will confirm the faith of his brothers and sisters, and lead us to a deeper commitment to Jesus, the Christ, the Son of the living God.

We pray to the Lord.

2. For nations facing the increase of Ebola, that God will deliver them from present danger, heal the sick, comfort the sorrowful, enlighten researchers, make wise their leaders.

We pray to the Lord.

3. For people who are suffering the aftereffects of earthquakes, wildfires, and drought, that they will be helped quickly and effectively by the nations of the world.

We pray to the Lord.

4. For those who have been forced into the modern forms of slavery, that on this International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition, a new energy will confront and overcome this old evil.

We pray to the Lord.

5. For the people of Palestine's West Bank facing constant harassment, denial of religious freedom, civil rights and freedom of movement, along with the impoverished people of Gaza, that justice will prevail.

We pray to the Lord.

6. For the religious order of St. Mary of Guadalupe and for the Diocese of Raleigh: that they may experience a growth in the number of vocations to religious life and to the priesthood.

We pray to the Lord.

7. For all of our parishioners, relatives and friends who had died, that they will enter the glory of God.

We pray to the Lord.

Celebrant:

Almighty God, whose love is everlasting, receive our thanksgiving, and increase the strength of our souls, and lift up the lowly to the experience of peace. Through Christ our Lord.