

Sunday Q&A

Your Faith in Focus



THE SHAPING OF THE CHURCH

Who were Saints Peter and Paul, and what do they have to do with us now?

This is a special day where we pay homage to two of the Church's early leaders. Peter is often depicted holding the keys to our Church, while Paul holds a sword. Who were these men of God, and what does their mission have to do with us today?

Pillars of Our Faith

Christian devotion to Saints Peter and Paul has a most ancient origin. The special Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul has always been celebrated in Rome, at least since the reign of the emperor Constantine. Some Roman catacombs from this time period possess graffiti requesting the intercession of these great saints. One scribbled inscription reads, "Paul and Peter, make intercession for Victor." Every June 29, Catholics around the world also ask for the intercession of these saints before our Lord's throne.

As many great saints do, these apostles have nicknames. St. Peter is often called the "Prince of the Apostles," whereas St. Paul is typically known as the "Apostle to the Gentiles." Even though we celebrate the lives and contributions of both men on the same day, they played different roles in the life of the early Church.

Prince of the Apostles

Simon Peter was "the rock" upon whom Christ founded his Church. While he preached the Gospel to many different peoples, as St. Paul did, his main role in the life of the Church was an ecclesial one. As the first pope, it is fitting that St. Peter is called the "Prince of the Apostles." He is not a prince like a prince is in England. The word "prince" comes from the Latin *princeps*, meaning "supreme head" or "ruler." As Christ's Vicar on earth, St. Peter and his successors have been given temporal authority and the power to "bind and loose," as our Lord said (Matthew 16:19). We see this with St. Peter presiding over the Council of Jerusalem in the Acts of the Apostles.

Apostle to the Gentiles

St. Paul traveled a bit more than St. Peter. Look inside almost any Bible from the middle of the twentieth century, and you'll often find a map detailing St. Paul's travels from Corinth to Galatia. Because he made so many contacts, it's fitting that we commemorate him as the "Apostle to the Gentiles." Keep in mind that it was also St. Paul who rebuked St. Peter during the controversy stemming from whether Gentiles needed to be circumcised. Whenever one reads any letter by St. Paul, it is clear he is driving home the point that salvation comes through Jesus Christ, not through the works of the Torah.

The Magisterium and the Mission

The beauty of this special solemnity is that we focus on two specific roles of the Church. One is to govern. That is why we have the Magisterium: It ensures us that we are living in God's truth. When all the bishops are united with the pope, we can be assured that a certain teaching is true. We were promised this certitude by Jesus himself before he ascended into heaven. This is embodied in St. Peter, and it is comforting to know that no matter what, the gates of hell will never prevail against this Church that Jesus founded. It is continually the pillar and bulwark of truth.

The Church also is meant to go out to others. Since we are the Church, members of one Body with Christ as our Head, we have a duty to go out and spread the gospel message. We may not all have as much success as St. Paul did, but that doesn't mean we have to stop trying. Don't we live in

Ponder and Pray

- How am I called to be a rock in my life and family?
- In my life, who am I called to share the Gospel with?

Make It Your Own

a world that has become largely “gentile”—that is, a world that really doesn’t know God much at all?

Our world is much like the one that Saints Peter and Paul lived in. There is a lot of work to do here in the twenty-first century in building the Kingdom of God. But it is not impossible. If these two great apostles could do so much on their own, just think what 200 or even 2,000 Catholics with a similar mindset could do!

Like St. Paul, we need to be apostles to the “gentiles” of our age; like St. Peter, we need to stand firmly on the “rock” of our salvation. We should learn from this week’s solemnity that it is our job as Catholics to do what St. Peter and St. Paul were called to do. If we haven’t really answered that call yet, now is a perfect time to resolve to do so.

Dive Deeper

To read the full article on Saints Peter and Paul, scan the code

or visit the URL:

<https://media.ascensionpress.com/2018/06/29/the-missions-of-sts-peter-and-paul-passed-on-to-us/>



Week 26



PHASE 3: MEDITATING ON THE MYSTERIES

The Glorious Mysteries

RESURRECTION:

A Heart That
Is Steadfast



The Fresco Women Visit the Empty Tomb by C. Secchi

Jesus rises from the dead; he has defeated sin and death, offering hope and eternal life to all who believe in him. No stone—physical or spiritual—can prevent the great miracle of Our Lord's life triumphing over death.

The angel who rolled the stone away from the tomb presents the facts of the incredible but true Resurrection to the first person on the scene.

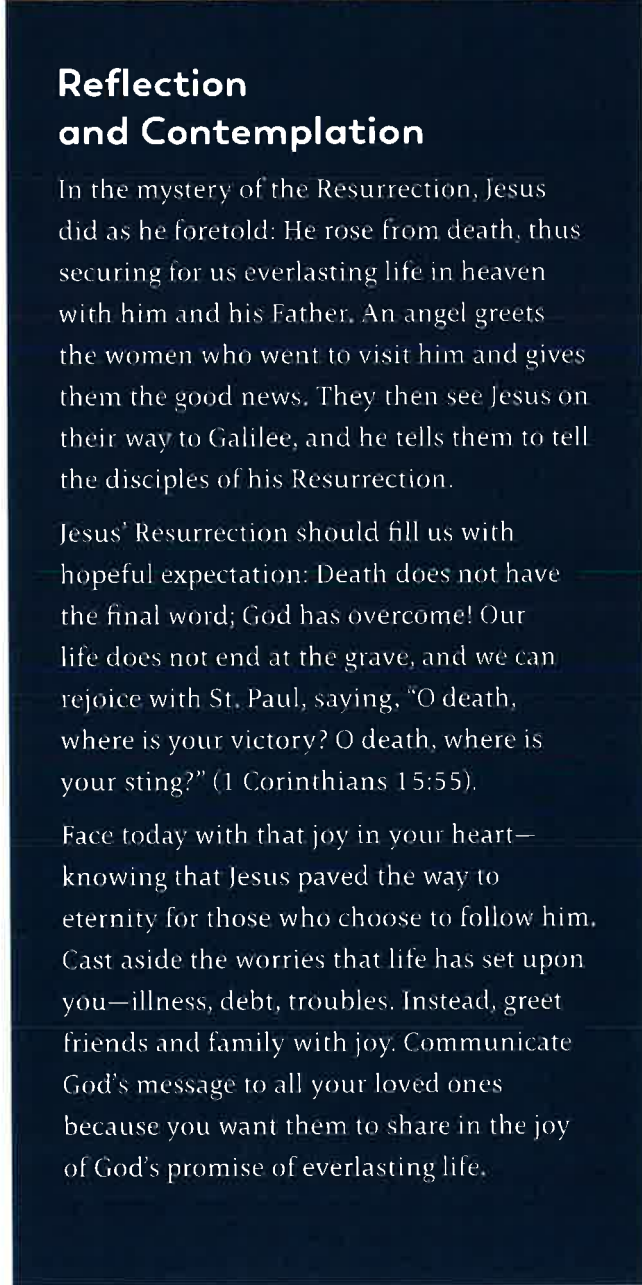
And with faith, the surprised and joyful Mary of Magdala believes what she sees and hears and runs to deliver the good news to the apostles.

Fruit of this mystery: We pray for a faithful heart.

Scripture: Matthew 28:1–10

Now after the sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to

see the tomb. And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone, and sat upon it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. Behold, I have told you." So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. And behold, Jesus met them and said, "Hail!" And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see me."



Face today with that joy in your heart—
knowing that Jesus paved the way to
eternity for those who choose to follow him.
Cast aside the worries that life has set upon
you—illness, debt, troubles. Instead, greet
friends and family with joy. Communicate
God's message to all your loved ones
because you want them to share in the joy
of God's promise of everlasting life.



This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

The Rosary in a Year is a daily podcast, produced by Ascension and hosted by Fr. Mark-Mary Ames, CFR. It takes Catholics on a journey to form a lasting habit of prayer and gain tools to enter more deeply into meditation on the lives of Jesus and Mary through the Rosary. This bulletin was adapted from the podcast and materials that complement the podcast.

Encountering the Word

with Nicholas Labanca

Saints Peter and Paul (C)

Acts 12:1–11 • 2 Timothy 4:6–8, 17–18 • Matthew 16:13–19



Courageous Witnesses to the Faith

The Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul on June 29 is a day rich in meaning, highlighting the lives of these two pillars of the Church. In the Byzantine tradition, Peter and Paul are honored as “Teachers of the Universe” and “Luminaries of the Church,” reflecting their foundational roles in spreading the Gospel to every corner of the world. Their significance in the early Church is clear, with early Christian inscriptions calling on them to “make intercession” for the faithful. This deep

veneration reflects not only respect but also recognition of their powerful reflection of Christ.

These apostles remind us of the model of “spiritual multiplication.” Like Christ, who poured into twelve disciples and particularly the three closest to him, Peter and Paul focused on nurturing a core group of disciples, creating a foundation for the Church that has continued to grow. St. Paul exemplified this by mentoring figures like Timothy and Titus, ensuring that the Gospel spread far beyond his own reach.

This model is one we are called to adopt in our own lives. Are there one or two people we can walk with and share the message of Christ with intentionally, as Peter and Paul did? Evangelization is not just about teaching or studying but also about sharing life and supporting others in faith.

Inspired by St. John Paul II, we can look to the perseverance of Saints Peter and Paul, trusting that God’s grace will sustain us. Like these

two great apostles, we can cooperate with God’s grace to bring light to the world, strengthened by their example and intercession. As they faced trials with zeal, may we, too, be courageous witnesses to the Faith.



Saints Peter and Paul, in the Cathedral of the Holy Trinity in Krizevci, Croatia

Live the Gospel

Nicholas Labanca says, “‘Spiritual multiplication’ was key to the mission of the apostles Peter and Paul, the saints we celebrate today. Like Christ, they invested in a few disciples who then spread the Faith. This week, be like Peter and Paul and consider who you might ‘walk with’ spiritually—one or two people you can guide or encourage in faith. Seek the saints’ intercession as you share the light of Christ with others, trusting in God’s grace to bring growth and transformation.”

Dive Deeper

Scan this code to watch:



Or go to

<https://media.ascensionpress.com/2020/06/29/why-sts-peter-and-pauls-day-is-a-solemnity/>

Ponder and Pray

- » Reflecting on the title “Luminaries of the Church” for Peter and Paul, how can you strive to bring Christ’s light into your community or workplace?

- » How can the examples of courage and trust shown by Peter and Paul inspire you to persevere in the face of obstacles?

- » What might the example of Peter and Paul teach you about surrendering more deeply to God’s will?

“

**The Lord will rescue me
from every evil threat and
will bring me safe to his
heavenly Kingdom.**

—2 Timothy 4:18

”

Make It Your Own

You and others in your household may use this space to write anything about today’s Mass. It might be your view of today’s reflection, your priest’s homily, your answers to the questions on this page—anything to help you and your household get the most out of today’s Mass.



THANK YOU, PETER AND PAUL



Acts 12:1–11 • 2 Timothy 4:6–8, 17–18 • Matthew 16:13–19

Family Car Talk

“But who do you say that I am?” says Jesus in today’s Gospel. Simon Peter says in reply, *“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”* Talk through the questions with your family on the way home from Mass today.



How do you feel when someone understands and “gets” you? Does Jesus feel this way about you?



Has there ever been a time when someone asked you about your faith in Jesus? What was that like to share your beliefs?

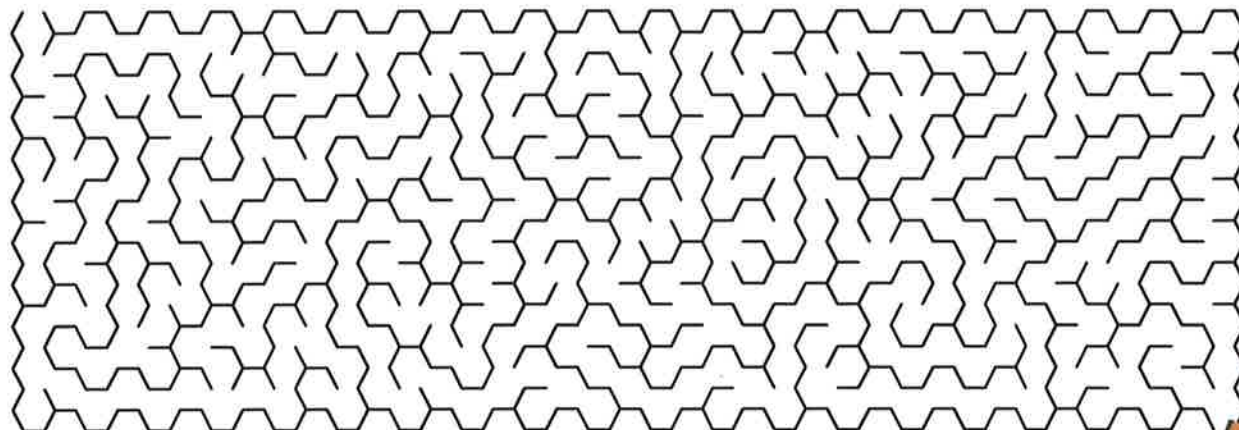


How can you show Jesus that you believe he is the Christ (our Savior) this week?



ST. PAUL RUNS ALL THE WAY!

Instructions: St. Paul says in today’s second reading, *“I have competed well; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith. From now on the crown of righteousness awaits me.”* Help St. Paul finish the race by completing the maze.



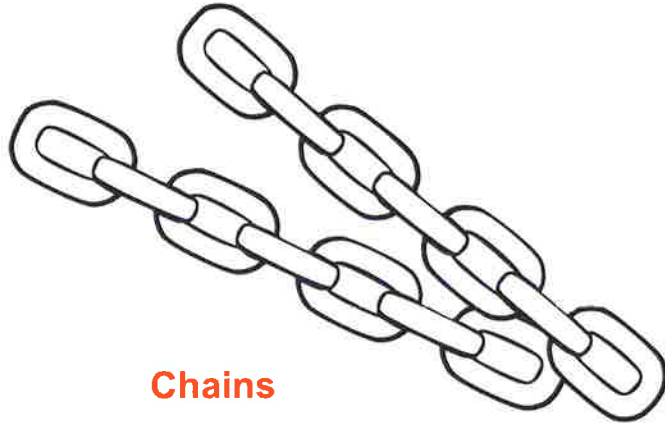


THE ANGELIC RESCUE OF ST. PETER

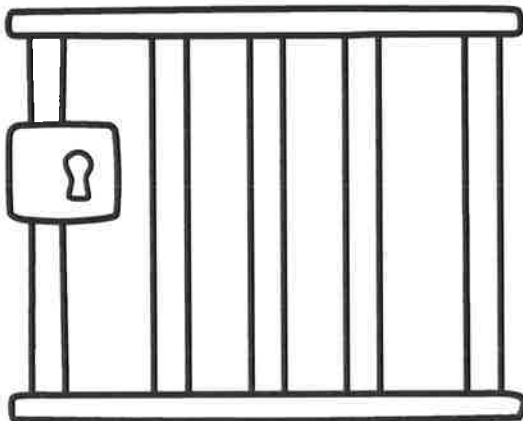
Instructions: We hear in the first reading that St. Peter is let out of prison by an angel who takes off his chains. The first Christians, like St. Peter, often were hurt badly and killed. To honor St. Peter—our first pope—color each of the images. Did you know you, like St. Peter, have your very own guardian angel?



St. Peter



Chains



Jail



Angel

Week Twenty-Six

Days 176–182



Divided Kingdom Narrative: 2 Kings 8–16 | Supplemental: Hosea 8–14; Amos 1–9; Jonah 1–4; Micah 1–4; Psalms 108–110, 122, 124, 138–139

THE REFRAIN OF THE ANCIENTS IS FOR US



City of Nineveh's fate awaits

We find a balance in this week's readings between the historical narrative given in 2 Kings and the writings of four different prophets. Although Israel had known the activities of prophets like Elijah and Elisha, a new movement of prophets began to both follow God's instructions and write about it. The writing prophets—such as Hosea, Amos, and Isaiah—are an important element in the development of God's interaction with his people. The inspired historical books now can be read in conjunction with the inspired writings of prophets.

- The readings from 2 Kings continue the stories of partial obedience to God from the kings of Judah and significant disobedience from the kings of Israel.
- The repeated theme in Hosea is that God has blessed the people abundantly, yet they offer his treasure to idols.
- Hosea begs the people of Israel to turn from evil. Though God's faithfulness is unending, if people choose something other than the Lord, he will let them go to what they have chosen.
- Judah's transgressions are found in Amos 2. The people reject God and worship falsely. Amos calls them to true worship.
- Amos proclaims that the Lord takes no delight in the people's solemn assemblies because of (1) their failure to care for the poor and (2) their idolatry with Jeroboam's golden calves.
- Today, those who live extravagantly may never witness the poor's needs, thus ignoring them and the injustices they suffer.
- When God calls Jonah to preach repentance to a nation of Israelite enemies, the prophet tries to reject the mission. Yet God shows his love and care for all, Jews and Gentiles alike.
- During Isaiah's time, Micah is also serving God as a prophet. Like the other prophets, he proclaims both judgment and hope—God's judgment if the people remain far from the Lord but hope if they draw near to him.
- The constant refrain of the prophets is: "Return to the Lord before it is too late." Their message remains ours today.

Dive Deeper

Today, reflect on the consistent call of the prophets: Return to the Lord before it is too late. Sometimes, returning to the Lord requires a dramatic conversion. Often, though, it means simply surrendering to God's plan and seeking to deepen your relationship with him every day through prayer.

Bible Answers

Is the story of Jonah historical?

When God calls him to preach to Nineveh, Jonah cannot stomach the task of speaking to his ancestral enemy about God's merciful love. He flees on a ship and almost drowns, but God rescues Jonah by sending a large fish to swallow him. Jonah goes on to proclaim God's Word to Nineveh.

While many modern biblical scholars see the book of Jonah as an allegory, a story, rather than a recounting of actual historical events, the Church takes no definitive position on this matter. So Catholics are free to read Jonah either as historical or as a story of how God deals mercifully with everyone, even those who were enemies of his people.



ANCIENT PORTRAYAL OF AN ISRAELITE KING

This black limestone obelisk honoring King Shalmaneser III, circa 825 BC, is displayed in the British Museum in London.

The inscription identifies one figure as Jehu, son of Omri, an Israelite king. (See 2 Kings 9.)



Scan the QR code to listen to the *Bible in a Year* podcast on the Ascension app, to get exclusive content, and to access transcripts for every episode. Download the reading plan at <https://media.ascensionpress.com/category/ascension-podcasts/bibleinayear/>

The Bible in a Year is a daily podcast, produced by Ascension and hosted by Fr. Mike Schmitz, where we read the whole Bible following *The Great Adventure* Bible-study program created by Jeff Cavins. This bulletin was adapted from *The Bible in a Year Companion* books that complement the podcast.

Week 26

Paragraphs 1290–1340



THE CATECHISM IN A YEAR

WITH FR. MIKE SCHMITZ

How We Worship PART TWO: THE CELEBRATION OF THE CHRISTIAN MYSTERY

UNITED TO CHRIST

If we have been baptized and confirmed, we no longer belong to ourselves but to Christ. The sacrament of Confirmation unites us to Christ and his Church and empowers us to evangelize throughout the world. The Eucharist is also a sign of unity. The Eucharist is the living presence of Christ, continuously offered to the Father through the Holy Spirit. The Eucharist allows us to experience God's immense love in a profound and tangible way. The Eucharist fulfills the Jewish Passover, establishing the New Covenant in Jesus' Blood. Every celebration of the Eucharist looks forward to heaven, allowing us to taste the love God has for us.

Keep in Mind

- In Confirmation, the bishop anoints us with sacred chrism (oil).
- Confirmation deepens our relationship with God the Father, unites us more closely with Jesus, increases the gifts of the Holy Spirit, unites us more fully to the Church, and strengthens us to be true witnesses of Christ and the Faith.
- "Every baptized person not yet confirmed can and should receive the sacrament of Confirmation" (CCC 1306).
- We must prepare with prayer and be free of mortal sin to receive the full effects of the Confirmation.
- We choose a Confirmation sponsor to help us grow in faith.
- "The holy Eucharist completes Christian initiation" (CCC 1322).
- We can be admitted to the Eucharist only if we are in communion with the Church.
- The Eucharist is "the source and summit of the Christian life" because it is Christ himself (CCC 1324).
- The name "Holy Mass" signifies that we receive Jesus' Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity and the Holy Spirit, and are sent to carry that grace into the world.



The Last Supper
by Juan de Juanes (1555–1562)

Dive Deeper

Our Lord instituted the Eucharist for us on Holy Thursday, the night before his death. He gave us this sacrament "to perpetuate the sacrifice of the cross throughout the ages until he should come again" (CCC 1323).

The Eucharist anticipates heaven. How has God restored you through Holy Communion?

- The Eucharist is not a symbol but the true sacrifice of Christ offering himself for our salvation.
- The bread and wine signify the Creator’s generosity and providence.
- The bread and wine also have connections to the Jewish Passover and the miraculous gift of manna. Jesus fulfills all of these.
- In John 6, Jesus’ teaching on the Eucharist caused disciples to abandon him, highlighting the difficult mystery of the Real Presence.
- “To receive in faith the gift of his Eucharist is to receive the Lord himself,” and rejecting the Eucharist is rejecting the Lord (CCC 1336).

Use the space below to reflect on this week's content.

Take It to Prayer

God Our Father, thank you so much for the gift of your Son, Jesus Christ, in the Eucharist. Continue to send Jesus into our lives. Help us to always approach the Eucharist with hearts transformed by your grace and your Holy Spirit. We pray through Jesus Christ, Our Lord. Amen.



The best place to listen along is the Ascension app. Scan the QR code to get exclusive bonus content and transcripts for every episode.

The Catechism in a Year is a daily podcast produced by Ascension and hosted by Fr. Mike Schmitz. It helps us understand what it means to be Catholic by reading the entire *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and allowing those truths to shape our lives. This bulletin was adapted from the books that complement the podcast: *The Catechism in a Year Companion* by Petros Willey, Fr. Mike Schmitz, and Matthew Doering.