

**Acts 3:1-10; Psalm 19; Galatians 1:11-20; John 21:15-19**

**Acts 12:1-11; Psalm 34; 2<sup>nd</sup> Tim; Matt 16:13-19**

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Over the past week I have kept having this re-occurring image of a single droplet of blood drip from the foot of Jesus as he dies on the cross. It falls on the Tabernacle. Just a single drop. To watch it feels like watching something monumental happening in slow motion, with no conclusion. It is just a perfectly contained expression of salvation.

Today we are observing the feast of St Peter and Paul, two of the great pillars of the Church. Lets observe them as they live out the Eucharist, in particular how they receive the Precious Blood.

Peter, is in prison, awaiting execution by Herod. An angel comes and releases Peter from his chains and leads him out of the prison and to the home of the mother of John Mark. As an aside, This Mark is the writer of the Gospel of Mark which is usually regarded as having been told by Peter and recorded by Mark, because Peter was just a fisherman. Anyway, after this Peter walks out of the narrative of the Book of Acts. He appears in Paul's letter to the Galatians and Corinthians, and then there is testimony that after a period of travel he ends up in Rome, where he will be put to death.<sup>1</sup>

At least one commentator believes that '*The escape of the prophet Peter from prison becomes a demonstration that the resurrection of Jesus continues to empower his apostles.*'<sup>2</sup> I am sure that this is correct, but I do not think it is complete. I see in it a preparation for Peter to bear witness to

Jesus in Rome. It is a demonstration of God's power in this world, but as a strengthening for Peter to fulfil God's will for him. In a way, Peter is not rescued from death, but he is saved for a death that will fulfil his discipleship and display Jesus' glory. He knows that God can save Him, and he can also freely accept to die in the right place and in the right manner. This is the way that Jesus accepted his own death in the Garden of Gethsemane, when he prays to the Father: '*Remove this cup from me. Yet, not as I will, but as you will.*'<sup>3</sup>

This has become Peter's prayer.

Here there is a faint but visible outline of the Eucharist, with the chalice of our Lord's blood having been willingly poured out by Jesus himself, now accepted by Peter as his own course of action. There is the drop of blood.

Paul's letter to Timothy is written from prison, with the purpose of strengthening Timothy, so that he can lead a Christian community. It is also a farewell letter. For himself, Paul sees that the writing on the wall, so to speak. He sees his end is coming. The expression '*I am already being poured out as a drink offering*' would have resonated with both Jewish or Gentile listeners for whom to pour wine into a fire or on an altar could be a kind of prayer. In this way Paul sees his own coming death as a type of prayer to God. It seems like a willing, perhaps even joyful, acceptance of death in honour of Jesus.

Here too, there is a Eucharistic overtone, perhaps a clearer one. Wine from a cup is poured out as a prayer and symbolising the life's blood. We are reminded of Jesus offering his own life to God as he hands

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<sup>1</sup> Gal 2:14; 1 Cor1:10, 9:5. 1 Pet 5:13, 1 Clem 5:4.

<sup>2</sup> Johnson, Luke Timoty, Acts: Sacra Patina, p214

<sup>3</sup> Mark 14:

the cup to his disciples '*take this, all of you and drink from it, for this is the chalice of my blood.*'

Jesus gives himself to Peter and to Paul to sustain them. He gives himself to us, to sustain us: that is what the Eucharist, the Mass, is for. We are offered the chalice with the words: '*The Blood of Christ*'. We respond 'Amen'. This means, truly I believe that this is the Blood of Christ. But with those words we are also accepting His sacrifice for us, and we are also asking for the transformative power that accompanies it. The same power that changed Peter and Paul from ordinary men to extra-ordinary saints. Truly, as I lift the chalice to my lips, I accept my participation in his living sacrifice as my own, that I become part of it. This is why I am called "Christian".

You cannot hear the words if you do not approach the cup. It was poured out for you to take. If you do not take the Precious Blood, do not pass by without at yearning an act of love to Jesus such as a bow or a sign of the cross, after all it was poured out for you. Habit is not a reason to pass it by. It is more sacred than the whole of the world. It is a taste of heaven. There is one risk with taking the Precious Blood, even if it just a single drop: He might hear your 'Amen'. We might learn to love Him as He has loved us. May not one drop of His Precious Blood be wasted.

Peter and Paul, may we love like you. May we live like you. Pray for us.