



Celebrate

Peter and Paul, Apostles

June 29, 2025

Today we celebrate two great figures of the early church, Peter and Paul, who represent the spread of the gospel to both Jews and Gentiles and, according to tradition, were martyred on this date. The witness of Peter and Paul inspires us as we seek ways to faithfully proclaim the gospel in our contemporary context.

Prayer of the Day

Almighty God, we praise you that your blessed apostles Peter and Paul glorified you by their martyrdoms. Grant that your church throughout the world may always be instructed by their teaching and example, be knit together in unity by your Spirit, and ever stand firm upon the one foundation who is Jesus Christ our Lord, for he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

First Reading

Acts 12:1-11

King Herod had James killed and had Peter put in prison, under heavy guard. In what Peter first believes is only a vision, an angel leads him past unseeing guards, out of the prison, and to freedom.

About that time King Herod laid violent hands upon some who belonged to the church. ²He had James, the brother of John, killed with the sword. ³After he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. (This was during the festival of Unleavened Bread.) ⁴When he had seized him, he put him in prison and handed him over to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending to bring him out to the people after the Passover. ⁵While Peter was kept in prison, the church prayed fervently to God for him.

⁶The very night before Herod was going to bring him out, Peter, bound with two chains, was sleeping between two soldiers, while guards in front of the door were keeping watch over the prison. ⁷Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell.

He tapped Peter on the side and woke him, saying, "Get up quickly." And the chains fell off his wrists. ⁸The angel said to him, "Fasten your belt and put on your sandals." He did so. Then he said to him, "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me." ⁹Peter went out and followed him; he did not realize that what was happening with the angel's help was real; he thought he was seeing a vision. ¹⁰After they had passed the first and the second guard, they came before the iron gate leading into the city. It opened for them of its own accord, and they went outside and walked along a lane, when suddenly the angel left him. ¹¹Then Peter came to himself and said, "Now I am sure that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from the hands of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting."

Second Reading

2 Timothy 4:6-8, 17-18

Paul has faithfully persevered in the mission the Lord had given to him. Near life's end he rests in the promise of eternal life, confident that the Lord who has rescued him in the past will bring him into the heavenly kingdom.

As for me, I am already being poured out as a libation, and the time of my departure has come. ⁷I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸From now on there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

¹⁷But the Lord stood by me and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth. ¹⁸The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and save me for his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Gospel

John 21:15-19

Jesus invites Simon Peter to declare his love for him three times, in a manner reminiscent of the three times that Peter earlier denied Christ. Jesus commissions him to feed his sheep and predicts that he will die as a martyr for God.

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my lambs." ¹⁶A second time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Tend my sheep." ¹⁷He said to him the third time, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" And he said

to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep. ¹⁸Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go." ¹⁹(He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, "Follow me."

Prayers of Intercession

The prayers are prepared locally for each occasion. The following examples may be adapted or used as appropriate.

Drawn into the embrace of the holy Trinity, we lift our prayers for the wholeness of the church, the world, and all creation.

A brief silence.

We pray for the church. As you raised up apostles like Peter and Paul, raise us up to share your life-giving gospel. Enrich the proclamation of bishops, pastors, deacons, and all the baptized. God of grace,
hear our prayer.

We pray for the earth. As you rescued Paul from the lion's mouth, rescue your creation from harm. Sustain fragile ecosystems; watch over dwindling numbers of insects, birds, and fish; and open our hearts to regard this earth as a gift. God of grace,
hear our prayer.

We pray for the nations. As you bid Peter to feed your sheep, bid our leaders to feed all in need and work for their good. Make peace in places of conflict (*especially*), and bring justice to each community. God of grace,
hear our prayer.

We pray for all who suffer. As you stood by Paul and gave him strength, stand by all who know loneliness, and give strength to all who know persecution. Comfort those in grief and heal those who are sick (*especially*). Channel our restlessness into your work in the world. God of grace,
hear our prayer.

We pray for this assembly. As you freed Peter from prison, free us from lethargy and fear. Loose the chains of timidity and doubt, and teach us to pray fervently. Strengthen the ministry of prison chaplains and ministries, and accompany all who are incarcerated and their families. God of grace,
hear our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

We give thanks for all who rest in your eternal mercy. As you reserved a crown of righteousness for Paul, reserve for us a place in your heavenly kingdom, and bring us to life that knows no end. God of grace,
hear our prayer.

Gather all our prayers in your mercy, O God, through Jesus Christ, our Savior.
Amen.

Preparing for Next Week

Monday 1 John 2:7-11. **Tuesday** (commemoration of Catherine Winkworth, 1878; John Mason Neale, 1866; hymn translators) Psalm 140. **Wednesday** Matthew 10:16-25. **Thursday** (Thomas, Apostle) John 14:1-7. **Friday** Psalm 66:1-9. **Saturday** Zechariah 14:10-21. **4th Sunday after Pentecost** (commemoration of Jan Hus, martyr, 1415) Isaiah 66:10-14; Psalm 66:1-9; Galatians 6:[1-6] 7-16; Luke 10:1-11, 16-20.

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