

The Paper Pulpit

(Reflections from the Pastor)

Feast of St. Peter and St. Paul

Today we celebrate the feast of two great Saints; Saints we consider, after Christ, to be the very cornerstones of the Church. Two great Saints and yet two very human creatures: Paul, the persecutor of Christians, and Peter, who denied Christ three times. And yet these two unlikely people should become such important figures in the establishment of the Church. Jesus, Peter and Paul did not call us to be a good Church but a *great* Church and they all died for that cause. We'll probably not have to die for our faith, but what are we willing to do?

Two great saints, so well balanced with complementary gifts: Peter, first Pope and the touchstone of unity in the Church to this very day, and Paul, the first and the greatest Christian Missionary. These two poles of unity and mission are the hallmarks of the Catholic Church. They are at the root of our faith and each one of us needs to reflect them in our own lives. We need to review our lives to determine if we are actively building up the unity of the Church in our parish and in the world or helping to tear it down through our words and actions. We need to boldly proclaim Jesus and His love for us.

You might say this is too big a task for one person and you would be right. But nothing will be done unless each one accepts his or her share of responsibility. There can be a situation where everyone thinks unity within the parish is a good idea but yet nobody does much about it; then all it takes are one or two people who act divisively and everything falls apart. Each one of us must actively strive to build up unity within our Christian community. That means we must work together, socialize together and pray together. If no one did any work around here, if no one bothered to socialize and if no one took the trouble to pray or worship together we would not be a parish. As a parish, if we work, socialize and pray well, we'll be able to boldly proclaim Jesus in the parish and in the world. Thankfully, we do all these things. We do them all quite well, but as our teachers so often told us, we could do better. Take those three things, working, socializing and praying, and let each of us resolve to do a little more and we would see this parish transform from a good one to a *great* one.

The same goes for the family. There, we have also to work, socialize and pray together in order to be a fully functioning family. I think we have the ideal opportunity to do these three things around the family table. When we prepare a meal there is work to be done and it shouldn't all fall on one person. The food needs to be bought and prepared, the table must be set, the food served, the dishes washed and everything cleared up. When each person plays his or her part the whole family works together smoothly and we all feel better.

Because of the different generations within the family, socializing can sometimes be difficult. We don't all like the same kinds of music or TV shows. But around the table we generally have little problem socializing with each other, we can share our experiences and no one needs to dominate. It is really not so difficult to avoid arguments for an hour at mealtimes!

We know that prayer is quite often difficult within the family. Perhaps it was okay when we were little and our parents helped us to say our prayers. But as we grow older it can feel embarrassing and we don't all have the same degree of faith, and while it might be fine to worship alongside each other in Church it is not quite so easy to pray together in the home. We should take care not to lose it and if we have lost it we should try to reinstate it. A good way is for someone to say the simple prayer that we know so well: *Bless us O Lord and these thy gifts which we are about to receive from thy bounty through Christ our Lord.* Then, perhaps each person could briefly say aloud some intention they would like the others to pray for and finally draw it together by saying: *God bless the cook!*

Saints Peter and Paul are our models and our guides and our real models in unity and mission. As they did, we, too, can with the grace of Christ overcome our human weaknesses and be involved in building up the unity of the Church and widening its boundaries, boldly proclaiming Jesus Christ and His love and building up the Kingdom we can and we will not just be a good parish, but a *great* one.

Be assured of my prayers and please keep me in yours.

Sincerely in Christ, Fr. Jim Trempe