

# + SAINTS PETER AND PAUL

June 29, 2019

Homily of the Right Reverend Dom Philip Anderson, Abbot of Clear Creek Abbey  
In the Name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

*Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not; and thou, being once converted, confirm thy brethren.*<sup>1</sup>

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,  
My very Dear Sons,

The great Apostles Saints Peter and Paul: these are brothers in a true sense, a transcendent sense, sharing traits of a common spiritual heredity. They both lived an unconditional commitment to the truth of the Gospel in persevering unto death in and for the Faith, even though their paths took them in very different directions. Both traversed dark places in order to belong in a definitive way to the light of God, while following Our Lord with their entire being. Both labored greatly to establish the Church founded by Christ. In our day the Church herself perseveres in her pilgrimage amid both shadows that cause us all great dismay, and also the luminous testimonies of not a few, who someday will take their places among the canonized Saints. Our challenges as Catholics, following the path set down long ago by the Apostles, are many and serious.

In a recent discourse given in the Netherlands, Cardinal Sarah spoke to the world some sobering words:

In this day and age, we in the West are living through a silent apostasy. We no longer need God. People are trying to detach the local churches from Rome. People want to be autonomous with regard to Rome and the Vicar of Jesus Christ, that is, Peter, he who gives direction to the church of Rome. ‘The fully pure church that looks after charity,’ in the words of Ignatius of Antioch. Without Peter, everything in the Catholic Church would be destroyed, reduced to fragments and become nothing. Jesus never created bishops’ conferences or local Churches. It is on Peter that He built His Church.

But the crisis is broader. The late founder of the organization *Aid to the Church in Need*, Father Werenfried van Straaten, tells in one of his books<sup>2</sup> of a Czech priest, who spent many years in Communist prisons. What was not the dismay of this confessor of the Faith upon witnessing, after his release from prison, this gradual apostasy of the Church outside the walls of the concentration camp? Here are that priest’s own words:

I was in prison for 12 years because I wanted to remain faithful to Rome. I was martyred because I did not want to be unfaithful to the Pope. I lost everything for my faith. But this faith has given me a peace and a certainty that turned these prison years into the most enriching years of my life. You in the West have lost this peace in God. You have undermined the faith in such a way that it does no longer offers peace. In your freedom, you have betrayed that for which we have suffered in our persecution. The West has disappointed me deeply. I would rather spend another 12 years in that Communist jail than to remain with you any longer.

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 22:31-32.

<sup>2</sup> *Where God Weeps*.

Our current situation has changed a good deal since those words were written some decades ago, but we live it the continuation of that same crisis. The sad event of the burning of Notre-Dame cathedral earlier this year remains a symbol of the destruction that is much upon us and upon a large part of our contemporary world. Here is another quote from the memorable discourse Cardinal Sarah mentioned earlier:

The West is engaged in a process of self-destruction, despite scientific and technological success and an appearance of prosperity. Betrayal, is that not what appeared in the life of the Prince of the Apostles, the apostle Peter, in the night from Holy Thursday to Good Friday? Did he not then taste the bitter fruit of this desertion: a boundless sadness and loneliness that could have led him to suicide, like Judas, if he had not met the eyes of the Lord who was begging for his love?

But Peter did meet those eyes, and he came back.

Vladimir Ilyich Lenin really knew what he was talking about when he characterized the whole Communist scheme he fathered in Russia as “total revolution against God.” It led to the death of some 80 million human beings and continues to have an evil influence in the world today. In our particular moment of history it seems as though a kind of mutation of the Marxist project, that revolution against God hatched by the Bolsheviks, has appeared in the surprising new disguise of moral deviations such as abortion and the destruction of the family. Cardinal Sarah sees the root of this new ideology as a rejection, not only of God, but of the very idea of paternity. The consequence is the loosening of human beings from their roots and their true identity, on both the natural and the supernatural levels. The only remedy, he adds, is “our renewed union with Jesus, with the God-Man, the Incarnate Son of God with the restoration of the Church to its original and authentic image”. Saints Peter and Paul will help us from Heaven to accomplish this renewal, if we set ourselves to the task.

Perhaps, what we are most wanting in our day is just to rediscover the healthy balance people once had—not perfect, but much better—between simple work and prayer. We need, no doubt, to leave behind the excessive influence the electronic media exercise over us and returning to simpler tasks. Saint Peter was a fisherman—a fisher of fish, even before becoming a fisher of men—; Saint Paul occupied his hands as a “tentmaker”<sup>3</sup> weaving cloth perhaps from goat hair. It may still be possible to find sanity again in the simple joys of life, sustained by the one true Catholic and Apostolic Faith. Above all we really need in our day a restoration of true and humble Christian joy. Quoting Saint Ambrose and Saint Paul, Pope Francis spoke the following on the feast of Saints Peter and Paul last year.

Let us confess with our lips and heart that Jesus Christ is Lord (cf *Phil* 2:11). This is the *cantus firmus* that we are called daily to intone. With the simplicity, the certainty and the joy of knowing that “the Church shines not with her own light, but with the light of Christ. Her light is drawn from the Sun of Justice, so that she can exclaim: ‘It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me’ (*Gal* 2:20).”<sup>4</sup>

Immaculate Heart of Mary, Queen of the Apostles, intercede for us, pray for us. Amen. Alleluia.

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. Acts 18:3.

<sup>4</sup> Homily at Saint Peter’s, June 29, 2019. Cf. Saint Ambrose, *Hexaemeron*, IV, 8, 32.