

# + SAINTS Peter and Paul

June 29, 2023

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

*At that time...Jesus saith to [His disciples]: But whom do you say that I am?*

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

There is something supremely important about love in its highest expression. “God is love [or charity],” as the Apostle Saint John teaches us, “and he that abideth in charity, abideth in God and God in him.” Saint Paul, for his part, surpasses himself with his apotheosis, his hymn, of charity in the first letter to the Corinthians. “If I speak with the tongues of men, and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.”<sup>1</sup> In a world where we do not enjoy the beatific vision, where, like birds of the night, we see only by the twilight of Faith, the love that is put in our hearts by the Holy Spirit is, in a way, our surest guide. Nevertheless, there is the question of what is in our intellect, in our mind. There is that other most crucial question: that of truth. “And this,” says Saint John, “is the declaration which we have heard from him, and declare unto you: That God is light, and in him there is no darkness.”<sup>2</sup> “He who saith that he knoweth him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.”<sup>3</sup>

Again, after the His Resurrection the Lord seemed mostly intent upon reassuring Saint Peter after his fall and upon impressing upon him his role as Pastor, as Good Shepherd. Thus, the burning question: “He said to him the third time: Simon, son of John, lovest thou me?”<sup>4</sup> But earlier on, when came, perhaps, the most crucial question ever put to a group of human beings, it was about the truth: *At that time...Jesus saith to [His disciples]: But whom do you say that I am?* This is one of the few times, before the coming of the Holy Spirit, that Peter got it right. Simon Peter answered and said: “Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God.”<sup>5</sup> This is a matter of truth, of saving Truth.

In our day, for some time now, there has been much emphasis on compassion toward those in error, to the point of being irresponsible with regard to true compassion that is based on truth. We have politicians (to bring up the most glaring example) who, while pretending to be good practicing Catholics, violate, by their public actions, fundamental moral principles, principles which concern the fundamental truth of human life. Many have called upon the American bishops to do something about this scandal, and it seems they are determined to carry on this combat. Fortunately, the Holy See has both reiterated the truth that unions between gender-confused individuals cannot be blessed and has formally enshrined in Canon law a provision that any attempt to confer ordination on a woman will result in automatic excommunication of the priest or bishop attempting this and of the woman herself. Some may find these decisions cold and lacking in love. On the

---

<sup>1</sup> I Corin. 13.

<sup>2</sup> 1 John 1:5.

<sup>3</sup> 1 John 2:4.

<sup>4</sup> Jn 21:17.

<sup>5</sup> Matthew 16:16.

contrary, this is the work of the Church, of the Holy Spirit guiding the Church, that teaches us the beauty and the truth about our Faith and about human nature. As Our Lord Himself said to those who believed in Him: “If you continue in my word, you shall be my disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free,”<sup>6</sup> expression which the English Catholic poet Chaucer put in his own language: “And trouthe thee shal delivere, it is no drede.”<sup>7</sup>

The ultimate test of loving truth came to our fallen world with the Cross of Christ. It is the same standard of truth that was held up for the Apostles in the act of martyrdom. The beauty of this test of truth is captured in one of the great hymns in the Breviary for today’s feast of Saints Peter and Paul. Here is a fine translation of one of the stanzas:

O happy city Rome, the precious life-drops shed  
By these two noble chiefs thy walls have hallowed,  
By nought that is thine own, but by their deeds of worth,  
Thy fairness far excels all beauty else on earth.<sup>8</sup>

But where do we stand in our time of spiritual and moral confusion? In fact, true martyrs for the faith are being multiplied almost daily in certain countries around the globe—usually in places less rich in technology and industry. Meanwhile, our own so-called advanced societies seem almost to live under an evil spell, as unwise, even insane, ideologies spread like a spiritual pandemic of falsehood. There are still large pockets of truth and light, but the dark forces of an anti-Catholic, anti-Christian subculture have already almost submerged us—or so it would seem. When will the Saints appear to do spiritual warfare and restore truth and sanity?

In the Christian East there is a strong tradition of Warrior Saints. Also called “Soldier Saints”, these are a group of holy men who were generally soldiers in life, witnesses to Christ in death, and then finally revealed as heavenly protectors. The name “Soldier Saints” is a bit misleading, as this is merely a description of their appearance in icons, and not the reason for their sainthood. Nevertheless, there really *is* something of the soldier in their particular brand of sanctity. These Christian heroes, venerated by Catholics and Orthodox alike, are almost without exception martyrs, having lived in the early centuries of the Christian Church when the Roman Empire was still pagan. Their prototype was the Holy Martyr Longinus, the centurion who witnessed the Crucifixion and confessed before everyone, “*Truly this was the Son of God*” (Mt. 27:54). Church history relates that after the crucifixion, having come to believe in the Savior, Longinus received baptism from the apostles, left military service, and returned home to Cappadocia, where he was ultimately beheaded for preaching the Gospel.<sup>9</sup> There is also, of course, Saint George, and, in the Middle Ages, the peerless Saint Joan of Arc.

May a new generation of spiritual warriors, both men and women, step forward in our time in order to restore and nourish the kind of bold witness to the Faith that is, perhaps, lacking in too many sectors of our world. In so doing they will simply be following the example of Our Lord and of Saint Peter and Paul, who though not soldiers in their first walk of life, were led to wear armor of light and bear incomparable witness to

---

<sup>6</sup> John 8: 31-32.

<sup>7</sup> Chaucer, *Truth*.

<sup>8</sup> Translation: <http://chantblog.blogspot.com/2008/06/ss-peter-and-paul-june-29.html>

<sup>9</sup> See: <https://iconreader.wordpress.com/2012/05/07/the-warrior-saints/>

Christ. May Our Lady inspire and sustain these new cohorts of Warrior Saints in the battle for the culture of life and for Catholic Truth. Amen. Alleluia.