



DIOCESE OF HAMILTON

700 King Street West, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada L8P 1C7

Children's Liturgy of the Word

SAINTS PETER AND PAUL, APOSTLES

Overview

The Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul, celebrated on June 29th, honours two central figures in the early Church. Saint Peter, chosen by Christ, is seen as the foundation of the Church, while Saint Paul, once a persecutor of Christians, became the Apostle to the Gentiles.

Both Peter and Paul are believed to have been martyred in Rome, and they represent the entirety of Christ's Gospel. Their feast day is an ancient tradition, even older than Christmas in the Roman calendar. The Pope draws authority from them, and the Church prays for unity, as these two saints dedicated their lives to this cause.

Pope John Paul II noted that the journey of faith and love that led Peter and Paul from their homelands to Jerusalem, then to other parts of the world, and finally to Rome, serves as a model for every Christian's calling to witness Christ in the world. He also emphasized that, like Peter and Paul, we are called to a process of conversion and love for Christ.

Leader Reflection Questions

- † How well do I understand the individual stories and significance of Saints Peter and Paul?
- † How can I emulate the faith and courage of Peter and Paul in my own life?

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Background

Acts 12:1-11 The early chapters of Acts show the Jerusalem Church led by Peter, while later chapters focus on Paul's mission to the Gentiles. Divine intervention plays a key role, as exemplified when Peter and James narrowly escape death, allowing the Church to survive. The apostles frequently faced imprisonment for their bold witness to Christ, yet they were miraculously released, similar to Paul's escape during an earthquake in Thessalonika. Both Peter and Paul's stories highlight the guiding presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church. A memorable image from the narrative depicts a half-asleep Peter being led by an angel, reminiscent of a sleepy child.

Psalms 34 The psalmist praises the Lord continuously and invites others to join him in exalting His name. He recounts how he sought the Lord and was answered and delivered from fear.

2 Timothy 4:6-8, 17-18 In his letter to Timothy, Paul summarizes his mission and reflects on the divine help he's received through trials like shipwrecks and imprisonment. He desires full union with Christ, recognizing that all Christians share in His death and resurrection. Although he feels the pull to be with the Lord, Paul understands his responsibility to guide the communities he founded. He uses athletic imagery, comparing his struggles to a "good fight" and a "race," as he senses the end of his journey approaching.

Matthew 16:13-19 This gospel reading marks a pivotal moment as Peter acknowledges Jesus not only as the Messiah but as the Son of the living God. Jesus responds by renaming Peter as Kephas, meaning 'Rock,' which symbolizes the foundation of his assembly, hinting that this new ekklesia is the new People of God. Jesus grants Peter the authority to bind and loose, a promise also extended to the community in Matthew 18:18. This power is uniquely outlined in Matthew's account, although similar promises are found in Luke 22:32 at the Last Supper and John 21:15-17 after the resurrection. The authenticity and significance of these teachings are reinforced by the use of Aramaic and Semitic literary styles, suggesting their roots in Aramaic-speaking circles..

The Liturgy

Procession from the main Church

After the opening prayer, when all are seated, the leaders come forward and stand facing the altar.

Priest: (in these or similar words)

My dear children, today, we celebrate a special day for the Church, the Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul. These were two very important people who helped Jesus spread his message of love and faith. Go with your leaders to listen to a mystery about God.

When most of the children have formed a procession, the leader with the book proceeds to the place of the celebration. The second leader usually walks behind the children. Upon arrival at the location of the celebration, the leader places the book on the prepared table.

Welcome.

The leaders assist the children in sitting and preparing. **Begin with the Sign of the Cross.** Help the children think and connect their actions as they touch their foreheads, shoulders, and stomachs. The leader may say the following prayer in these or similar words.

Let us pray:

Dear God, thank you for giving us the examples of Saint Peter and Saint Paul. Help us to be brave and loving like them so that we can share your love with everyone. Amen.

Invite the children to listen to the readings. Proclaiming all the readings is unnecessary; however, the Gospel is required.

Readings from the Lectionary

First Reading

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

In those days, King Herod laid violent hands upon some who belonged to the Church. He had James, the brother of John, killed with the sword.

After he saw that it pleased some of the people,
he proceeded to arrest Peter also.

This was during the festival of Unleavened Bread.

When 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.

While Peter was kept in prison, the Church prayed fervently to God for him.

The 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.
Suddenly, 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.

The 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."

Peter went out and followed him; he did not realize what was happening with the
Angel's help was real; he thought he was seeing a vision.

After 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.

Then 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 people were expecting."

A period of silence is observed after the reading.

The word of the Lord.

Children: Thanks be to God.

A period of silence is observed after the reading.

Responsorial Psalm

R. The Lord set me free from all my fears.

I will bless the Lord at all times;
his praise shall continually be in my mouth.
My soul makes its boast in the Lord;
let the humble hear and be glad. **R.**

O magnify the Lord with me,
and let us exalt his name together.
I sought the Lord, and he answered me,
and delivered me from all my fears. **R.**

Look to him, and be radiant;
so your faces shall never be ashamed.
The poor one called, and the Lord heard,
and saved that person from every trouble. **R.**

The Angel of the Lord encamps
around those who fear him, and delivers them.
O taste and see that the Lord is good;
blessed is the one who takes refuge in him. **R.**

Second Reading

A reading from the letter of Saint Paul to Timothy.

Beloved:

I am already being poured out as a libation,
and the time of my departure has come.

I have fought the good fight,

I have finished the race,

I have kept the faith.

From 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.

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.

The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack

and save me for his heavenly kingdom.

To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

A period of silence is observed after the reading.

The word of the Lord.

Children: Thanks be to God.

A period of silence is observed after the reading.

Gospel

The children stand for the Gospel. They sign themselves on the forehead, lips, and chest.

✠ A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

When Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi,
he asked his disciples,

"Who do people say that the Son of Man is?"

And they said, "Some say John the Baptist,
but others Elijah,

and still others Jeremiah or one of the Prophets."

He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"

Simon Peter answered,

"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

And Jesus answered him,

"Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah!

For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you,
but my Father in heaven.

And I tell you, you are Peter,

and on this rock I will build my Church,

and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.

I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven,

and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven,

and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

At the end of the Gospel, the Minister of the Word proclaims, "The Gospel of the Lord."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Children: Glory to you, O Lord.

Simplified Readings for Children

First Reading

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

A long time ago, King Herod was being mean to the followers of Jesus. He hurt some of them. He even had James, who was John's brother, killed. He decided to catch Peter, too.

Herod's soldiers grabbed Peter and put him in jail. While Peter was in jail, the church prayed very hard to God for him.

Peter was sleeping between two soldiers. He was tied up with chains. Guards were also watching the door.

Suddenly, an angel from the Lord came into the jail, and a bright light shone. The angel touched Peter to wake him up and said, "Hurry, get up!" Then, the chains fell off Peter's hands.

The angel told Peter, "Get dressed and put on your shoes." Peter did what the angel said. Then the angel said, "Wrap your coat around you and follow me."

Peter followed the angel out of the jail. He didn't know if it was really happening or if he was dreaming. They walked past the first group of guards and then the second. Then they came to a big iron gate that led to the city. The gate opened all by itself. They walked down the street, and then the angel left Peter.

Peter realized that the Lord had sent his angel to save him from Herod and from the bad things the Jewish people wanted to do to him.

A period of silence is observed after the reading.

The word of the Lord.

Children: Thanks be to God.

A period of silence is observed after the reading.

Responsorial Psalm

R. Let us sing together: I will always thank God.

I will always thank the Lord;
his praise will always be on my lips.
I will be happy in the Lord;
let everyone who is humble listen and be glad. **R.**

Let's tell everyone how great the Lord is!
Let's all praise his name together!
I asked the Lord for help, and he answered me.
He saved me from all my fears. **R.**

Second Reading

A reading from the letter of Saint Paul to Timothy.

I am like a drink poured out for God, and it's almost time for me to go. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now a crown is waiting for me, because I did what was right. The Lord, who is a fair judge, will give it to me on that special day—and not only to me but to all who have waited for him to come.

But the Lord stayed with me and made me strong, so I could tell everyone the Good News. He saved me from the lion's mouth. The Lord will keep me safe from all bad things and bring me to his heavenly home. Glory belongs to him forever and ever. Amen.

A period of silence is observed after the reading.

The word of the Lord.

Children: Thanks be to God.

A period of silence is observed after the reading.

Gospel

The children stand for the Gospel. They sign themselves on the forehead, lips, and chest.

A reading from the holy Gospel, according to Matthew.

One day, Jesus and his friends were walking near a place called Caesarea Philippi. Jesus asked his friends, "Who do people say that I am?"

His friends answered, "Some people say you are John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and still others say Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

Then Jesus asked, "But who do you say that I am?"

Simon Peter spoke up and said, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God!"

Jesus said, "You are very correct, Simon, son of Jonah! God in heaven showed you this, not just any person."

Then Jesus said something very special to Peter: "You are Peter, and on you I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not be able to stop it."

Jesus also said, "I will give you the keys to God's kingdom in heaven. Anything you decide here on earth will also be decided in heaven."

Then Jesus told his friends not to tell anyone yet that he was the Messiah.

At the end of the Gospel, the Minister of the Word proclaims, "The Gospel of the Lord."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Children: Praise to you, O Lord.

Reflection:

The leader may offer this reflection in these or similar words. Remember the amount of time available to return to the main assembly. The leader may wish to reduce the number of questions. An excellent place to begin is the question:

Today is a special day because we are celebrating two very important people who were friends of Jesus: Saint Peter and Saint Paul. They lived a long, long time ago, but they are still important to us today. Let's learn a little bit about them.

Remember the story of Peter? King Herod was mean to Jesus' friends and put Peter in jail. But the church prayed for Peter, and an angel came to help him escape! Even though Peter was locked up and in danger, God was watching over him.

Have you ever been scared or worried?

How can remembering that God is with you help you be brave like Peter?

Paul knew he was going to die soon, but he wasn't sad. He said he had "fought the good fight" and "finished the race." He knew he had done his best to follow Jesus. Paul also said that the Lord stayed with him and made him strong.

What does it mean to "fight the good fight" and "finish the race"?

Jesus asked his friends, "Who do you say that I am?" Peter said, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God!" Jesus was happy because Peter knew who he truly was.

Who do you say Jesus is?

How can you show that you believe in Jesus every day?

What Does This Mean for Us?

Be Brave: Like Peter, we can be brave even when we are scared because God is always with us.

Do Your Best: Like Paul, we should try our best to follow Jesus and do good things.

Believe in Jesus: Like Peter, we need to know in our hearts that Jesus is the Son of God.

Saint Peter and Saint Paul were very different. Peter was a fisherman, and Paul was a teacher. But they both loved Jesus very much and wanted everyone to know about him. They both had challenges and hard times, but they never stopped believing in Jesus.

How can we be like Saint Peter and Saint Paul?

Following the reflection, the prayer leader invites everyone to stand to profess their faith. Recite the Creed or use the sample below to ask the children to respond.

Alternative Reflection

In this story, Jesus asks his friends who they think he is. Peter knows that Jesus is the Son of God. Jesus says that Peter is like a strong rock, and he will build his church on this rock. This means that Peter will be a leader and help many people follow Jesus. Jesus trusts Peter to help build his Church and to make good decisions.

Jesus tells Peter that Peter will be the rock on which Jesus will build his Church. That means Jesus chose Peter to be the leader and to help everyone follow Jesus.

Think about a big rock.

What does a rock do?

It stays strong and helps build things. Jesus wanted Peter to be strong like a rock in his faith and help build the Church.

Saint Paul was also very important. He travelled far and wide, telling people about Jesus. Both Peter and Paul loved Jesus very much and wanted everyone to know about Him.

Now, let's think about what we heard:

Why did Jesus call Peter the rock?

Because Peter said that Jesus is the Son of the living God and Jesus wanted Peter to be strong in faith.

What can we do to be like Saint Peter and Saint Paul?

We can be kind, tell others about Jesus, and be strong in our faith.

How can you be a "rock" for your friends and family?

By helping them, being kind, and sharing our love for Jesus.

Following the reflection, the prayer leader invites everyone to stand to profess their faith. Recite the Creed or use the sample below to ask the children to respond.

The Creed

Depending on the time, a simple profession of faith may be made (see below).

Leader: Do you believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth?

All: I believe.

Leader: Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, who gave his life for us?

All: I believe.

Leader: Do you believe in the Holy Spirit who lives in our hearts and gives us everlasting life?

All: I believe.

Leader: This is our faith. This is the faith of the Church. We are proud to profess it.

Prayer of the Faithful

Leaders may begin the intercessions by announcing the needs they know. The leader may need to repeat and paraphrase the petition and conclude it with the cue for the response: we pray. All respond to each petition by saying, "Lord, hear our prayer." Sample intercessions are below.

Leader: Today we celebrate Saints Peter and Paul, two great friends of Jesus who showed us how to live our faith. Let us pray to God, asking Him to help us follow their example. After each prayer, we will say, "Lord, hear our prayer."

1. For Pope Leo XIV, the leader of our Church, that he may be strong and wise like Saint Peter, guiding us in faith and love.
We pray to the Lord. All: Lord, hear our prayer.
2. For all the leaders in our community – our parents, teachers, and helpers – that they may show us the way to follow Jesus, just as Saint Paul taught others.
We pray to the Lord. All: Lord, hear our prayer.
3. For all those who are sick or sad, that they may feel the healing love of Jesus, just as the lame man was healed by Saint Peter.
We pray to the Lord. All: Lord, hear our prayer.
4. For all of us children, that we may grow to be strong in our faith, always ready to share the Good News of Jesus with our friends and family.
We pray to the Lord. All: Lord, hear our prayer.
5. For our own special prayers, which we hold in our hearts...
(Pause for a moment.)
We pray to the Lord. All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: Loving God, hear our prayers, and help us to follow the examples of Saint Peter and Saint Paul in faith, hope, and love. We ask this through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen.

Leader: Let's finish by making the Sign of the Cross together.

All: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Return to the church.

Ask the children to return to the main assembly. Ask them to return quietly and think about what they have heard and are now doing. Be mindful of children having difficulty finding their families.

Readings: Lectionary for Sundays and Solemnities, CCCB, Ottawa, ON.
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