

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, June 29, 2025

Saints Peter and Paul, Apostles

This email, entitled Looking to Sunday®, focuses on one or more of the scripture readings for the coming Sunday. It prepares readers to hear God's Word at Mass and it offers a point of reflection to consider in the days leading to Sunday. Looking to Sunday is written by Father Tom Iwanowski.

Looking to Sunday has been published for more than sixteen years.

SECOND AND THIRD

Who are the three most significant saints in the Catholic Church?

Without a doubt, the first among the saints would be the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of the Lord. Her significance is readily apparent. Thousands of church buildings throughout the world are named in her honor. We celebrate several feasts throughout the liturgical year that highlight moments in her life, such as the Immaculate Conception, the Annunciation, the Visitation, and the Assumption. Each time we say the Hail Mary or pray the Rosary, we bring Mary to mind and call upon her intercession.

If there is any question about who would be second and third on the list of significant saints, that doubt is removed by this Sunday's Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul.

In the apostle Peter, we have someone who went from being Simon the fisherman, the son of Jonah and the brother of Andrew, to being summoned by Jesus to follow him. As we hear in Sunday's Gospel (Matthew 16:13-19), Peter was the first disciple who recognized that his teacher was "the Messiah, the Son of the living God." Peter was also the one chosen by Jesus to be the rock on which he would build his Church. Even when Peter denied Jesus just hours after sharing the Last Supper, Jesus did not revoke his choice of Peter. After his Resurrection, the Risen Lord challenged Peter to reaffirm his love, and he commanded him to feed and care for the sheep of his Church.

Peter's critical role continues to this very day. Just recently, Pope Leo XIV became the latest chosen to fill the shoes of the fisherman from Galilee, to hold the keys to the kingdom of heaven, and to make decisions with heavenly consequences.

In Paul, the other apostle honored this Sunday, we have a man who went from being a fierce persecutor of Christians to being the greatest preacher of the Gospel.

On his way to Damascus to arrest the followers of Christ, Saul encountered the Risen Lord who opened his eyes to the truth of the Gospel and radically transformed his life. Saul, who had been hunting down the followers of Jesus and doing all in his power to put an end to this "Christian heresy" became Paul, the one who would preach the message of Jesus to Jews and Gentiles throughout much of the Roman Empire.

Paul preached the Gospel through his words, by the example of his life, and by his many letters to various Christian communities. As we listen to his letters that continue to be read at Mass, we hear the voice of Paul preaching to us.

As Paul himself tells us in Sunday's Second Reading (2 Timothy 4:6-8, 17-8), "The Lord stood by me and gave me strength, so that through me the proclamation might be completed and all the Gentiles might hear it."

The honored place that Peter and Paul hold in the Church is beautifully summarized in the Preface of Sunday's Mass. "The blessed Apostles Peter and Paul bring us joy: Peter, foremost in confessing the faith, Paul, its outstanding preacher, Peter, who established the early Church from the remnant of Israel, Paul, master and teacher of the Gentiles."

After the Blessed Mother, the greatest saints of the Church are the two we remember this Sunday.

Saint Peter and Saint Paul pray for us that by our words and example we may lead others to Jesus, the way, the truth, and the life!

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