



The Holy See

SOLEMNITY OF THE HOLY APOSTLES PETER AND PAUL

POPE FRANCIS

ANGELUS

Saint Peter's Square
Thursday, 29 June 2023

[Multimedia]

Dear brothers and sisters, *buongiorno!*

In the Gospel for today, the Solemnity of the Holy Apostles, Saints Peter and Paul, Jesus says to Simon, one of the Twelve: “You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church” (*Mt* 16:18). Peter is a name that has several meanings: it can mean rock, stone, or simply, pebble. And, in fact, if we look at Peter’s life, we discover a bit of all three of these aspects of his name.

Peter is a *rock*: there are many times when he is strong and steady, genuine and generous. He leaves everything to follow Jesus (cf. *Lk* 5:11); he recognizes him as Christ, the Son of the living God (cf. *Mt* 16:16); he dives into the sea to go quickly towards the Risen One (cf. *Jn* 21:7). Then, he boldly and courageously proclaims Jesus in the Temple, before and after being arrested and flogged (cf. *Acts* 3:12-26; 5:25-42). Tradition tells us also about his steadfastness when facing martyrdom, which happened right here (cf. Clement, *Letter to the Corinthians*, V, 4).

Peter, however, is also a *stone*: he is a rock and also a stone, able to offer support to others — a stone that, founded on Christ, acts as a support to brothers and sisters, for the edification of the Church (cf. *1 Pt* 2:4-8; *Eph* 2:19-22). We discover this too in his life: he responds to Jesus’s call together with Andrew, his brother, James and John (cf. *Mt* 4:18-22); he confirms the Apostles’ desire to follow the Lord (cf. *Jn* 6:68); he cares for those who suffer (cf. *Acts* 3:6); he promotes and

encourages the shared proclamation of the Gospel (cf. *Acts* 15:7-11). He is “stone”, a reliable point of reference for the entire community.

Peter is a rock, he is a stone, and he is also a *pebble*: his littleness emerges often. At times he does not understand what Jesus is doing (cf. *Mk* 8:32-33; *Jn* 13:6-9). When confronted with His arrest, Peter allows fear to overtake him and denies Him, then repents and weeps bitterly (cf. *Lk* 22:54-62). But he does not find the courage to stand under the cross. He locks himself in with the others in the Upper Room out of fear of being captured (cf. *Jn* 20:19). In Antioch, he is embarrassed to be with converted Gentiles — and Paul chides him to be consistent (cf. *Gal* 2:11-14). Lastly, according to the *Quo vadis* tradition, he tries to flee when faced with martyrdom, but he meets Jesus on the road and regains the courage to turn back.

This is all in Peter: the strength of the rock, the reliability of the stone and the littleness of a simple pebble. He is not a superman — he is a human being like us, like every one of us, who, in his imperfection, generously says “yes” to Jesus. But exactly like this with him — just as in Paul and in all the saints — it appears that it is God who makes us strong with his grace, who unites us with his love, and forgives us with his mercy. And it is with this true humanity that the Spirit forms the Church. Peter and Paul were real people. And today, more than ever, we need real people.

Now, let us take a look inside ourselves and ask ourselves some questions starting from the rock, from the stone and from the pebble. From the rock: Is there ardour, zeal, passion for the Lord and for the Gospel in us? Or is there something that easily crumbles? And then, are we stones, not stumbling blocks, but building blocks for the Church? Do we work for unity, are we concerned for others, especially the weakest? Finally, thinking of the pebble: Are we aware of our littleness? And above all, in our weaknesses, do we entrust ourselves to the Lord who accomplishes great things through those who are humble and sincere?

May Mary, Queen of the Apostles, help us imitate the strength, the generosity and the humility of Saints Peter and Paul.

After the Angelus the Pope continued:

Dear brothers and sisters, I address a warm greeting and special wishes to the people of Rome, on the feast of the patron saints Peter and Paul! I thank the *Pro Loco* Association of Rome, which has organized the historic flower festival, created by the master florists of the various *Pro Loco* Associations of Italy, now in its tenth edition. I am looking at [some of the displays] from here... There are some beautiful carpets of flowers inspired by peace, and this tells us not to tire of praying for peace, especially for the Ukrainian people, who are in my heart every day.

I renew my greeting to the Delegation of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, which participated in today's celebration, and I send an embrace to my dear Brother, His Holiness Bartholomew.

I greet you all, starting from the faithful who have come to celebrate with the Metropolitan Archbishops, for whom I blessed the Pallia this morning, and then the groups from Brazil, Croatia, Mexico, Nicaragua, Poland, the United States of America and various places in Italy.

I wish you all a happy feast day, and please, do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your lunch.
Arrivederci!