



a Kendall Hunt Company

Sts. Peter and Paul, A-C, Catechist - RCLB Lectionary



Catechist Background and Preparation

To prepare for this session, read all the readings.

Acts 12:1-11

2 Timothy 4:6-8, 17-18

Matthew 16:13-19

The Word in Liturgy

As you read these scriptures, pay attention to the things that make you wonder. What questions arise for you? Do you hear something new today in these words?

Read the Word in Liturgy and Catholic Doctrine sections that follow. These sections will help you understand the readings and the Church's teaching about Joseph as Mary's husband. Become comfortable with the session outline and check to be sure you have all the necessary materials for teaching the lesson.

The Word In Liturgy

This solemnity honors two great saints who, between them, represent the church's mission to both Jews (Peter's leadership was exercised from the Jerusalem church) and Gentiles (Paul is known as the "apostle to the Gentiles"). Saints Peter, who is called by Jesus "rock," and who is revered by Catholics as the progenitor of the Petrine ministry which has endured through the centuries, enjoys first place among the apostles and has profound significance for the church. Saint Paul is likewise a towering figure, whose theological genius, evangelical fervor, and tireless pastoral ministry were so instrumental in the founding of the Christian religion. When we honor Peter and Paul, in truth we honor the church as well, for their contributions have forever marked the faith and life of God's people.

The first reading from Acts details Peter's miraculous escape from prison, where he had been placed by Herod Antipas after the beheading of James the apostle. The role of the angelic messenger, plus the dreamlike effortlessness with which Peter evades multiple guards, is freed from chains, and walks through open iron gates, accentuate the element of divine intervention. The significant mention of the fervent prayer of the Christian community during this crisis makes the further point that the power of prayer outstrips that of tyrants.

It is fitting that the second reading, which relates to Paul is not a narrative, but speaks in the apostle's own voice—since most of what we know about Paul is learned through his letters. Here, speaking from prison, he reflects in his suffering and immanent death. He uses three metaphors to express the significance of his life. He calls it "a libation," that is being poured out. A cup of wine or oil poured on the at Jewish sacrifices, the libation suggests that Paul sees his death as sacrificial. The "dissolution" he speaks of (in Greek analysis) can refer to the unyolking of an animal from a harness. It further suggests that his death will be a release

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from the labors he has undertaken for the sake of the gospel. Last of all, the metaphor of the athletic contest ("fight" and "race" refer to the striving necessary to life; the "crown" a laurel wreath worn by a victorious athlete) suggests a purposeful life and death, made glorious by an everlasting reward in heaven. Paul confesses God's saving presence in his trials, and the passage ends with a prayer of praise—also characteristic of Paul's letters, which are frequently filled with prayer.

The gospel is Matthew's account of the confession at Caesarea Philippi, in which Peter identifies Jesus as the Messiah and son of God, and is in turn acclaimed by Jesus. Given a new title ("rock" was not a known personal name at that time) as a mission of teaching authority through the passing of the "keys" and the power of binding and loosing, Peter is thus established by Jesus in a special role because of his confession. In the context of today's celebration, the central importance of Peter's ability to proclaim the true identity of Jesus stands out as the key element of the passage. Peter is the one who names Jesus the Messiah, and is thus named by him "the rock" on which he will build his church.

Catholic Doctrine

The Papacy and Collegiality

Peter is described as the church's foundation, echoing this feast's gospel image of the "rock." Peter confesses his faith in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, the anointed Messiah. Paul takes up this theme immediately after his conversion and at the start of his own ministry. (CCC 442)

Tradition holds that because both Peter and Paul, the two major leaders of the apostolic church, were martyred in Rome, the responsibility for continuing to ensure the profession of faith has been handed on to the bishop of the local church of Rome. We believe that the charge of shepherding the church has passed down from Peter to successive holders of the office of the bishop of Rome.