

## Missionary Commentary

Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul, Apostles

June 29, 2025

## Dynamic Witnesses of Faith

## Sunday Readings

Acts 12:1-11

Psalms 34:2-9

2 Timothy 4:6-8, 17-18

Matthew 16:13-19

[USCCB Link to the Readings](#)

Today the Church celebrates the solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul who were martyred in Rome between the years 64 and 67 under the emperor Nero. They gave the ultimate sacrifice, based on their faith in Christ. Recently, we have heard much about the papacy with the passing of Pope Francis and the election of Pope Leo. Thus, this reflection will focus on the apostle Paul and his missionary vision summarized in eight “mission principles” which remain valid for all the Church’s missionary disciples today.

● **Profound Awareness of God’s call.** Paul and all evangelizers profoundly appreciate that *mission originates in the call of God*. The majority of Paul’s letters begin with a firm assertion of his identity as a chosen instrument of God: “From Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus who has been called to be an apostle, and specially chosen to preach the Good News...” (Rom 1:1).

● **Radical Commitment to Christ.** Paul’s conversion experience on the Damascus road was only the starting point of a life-long relationship; *mission envisions a totally Christ-centered life*. Paul writes: “Life to me, of course, is Christ...” (Phil 1:21). “Imitate me as I imitate Christ” (1Cor 11:1).

● **Voluntary Acceptance of Suffering.** Paul preached the Gospel by his life and example. In a particular way, *vulnerability and acceptance of the cross authenticate mission*. Paul considers his sufferings as a participation in the sufferings of Christ (2Cor 1:5-7); he recounts his numerous trials: imprisonments, beatings, shipwrecks, travels, robberies, hard labor, sleeplessness, hunger, thirst, and nakedness (cf. 2Cor 11:23-27).

● **Urgent Gospel Proclamation.** The Church and recent popes have asserted that *mission has lost none of its urgency in the contemporary world*. Paul’s words ring true: “Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel”! (1Cor 9:16). For all Christians, evangelization must be a “daily preoccupation” (2Cor 11:28).

● **Deep Love of the Church.** Paul primarily understands the Church as a local community of baptized followers of Jesus Christ (in Corinth, Rome, Ephesus); thus, *mission and love of the people who constitute the Church go hand-in-hand*. This principle echoes the thought of an elderly Maryknoll missionary who never tired of repeating: *Mission is People*.

● **Close Collaboration with Co-workers.** The apostle Paul, though a strong individual, was a team-worker in the task of evangelization; he understood that *all apostolic ministry is enhanced through collaborative efforts*. Some names of his mission companions are: Barnabas, Mark, Timothy, Silvanus, Titus, and Timothy.

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• **Effective, Exemplary Life-style.** It is an understatement to affirm that *the witness of a Christian life is the first and often most effective proclamation of the Gospel*. Paul always sought to draw people to Christ, not to himself.

• **Total Reliance on God's Providence.** Paul asks: "If God is for us, who can be against us"? (Rom 8:31). Indeed, *mission always remains "God's project" and evangelizers seek to be God's faith-filled, humble instruments*. Paul willingly faced Spirit-given "road-blocks" in his missionary journeys (cf. Acts 16:6-10).

**Conclusion.** Saint Paul continues to exhort all evangelizers (parents, youth, catechists, religious): "Shine in the world like bright stars, because you are offering it the word of life" (Phil 2:15-16).

## Notes on the Readings

### First Reading, Acts 12:1-11

This scripture passage describes the miraculous liberation of Peter from prison. The exact date is not specified; yet, historically, it is known that King Herod Agrippa ruled Judea in 41-44 AD. Thus, this event happened over ten years after Christ's Ascension. It also portrays that Peter was actively preaching the Christ-event, even if it meant threats to his life and freedom.

### Responsorial, Psalm 34:2-9

This psalm praises God for rescuing Peter. Indeed, when the afflicted one cries out to the Lord, the Lord hears his voice, answers his prayer, and delivers him. As the psalm notes: happy is the one who takes refuge in the Lord!

### Second Reading, 2 Timothy 4:6-8, 17-18

Paul's second letter to Timothy narrates one of Paul's final appearances in the New Testament. As a courageous old missionary, Paul ends his life as a prisoner in Rome. However, though lonely and awaiting death, Paul takes great consolation in his life as a dedicated evangelizer, grateful that he has fought the good fight, has finished the race, and has kept the faith. We can see this as an invitation to be able to say the same at the end of our life.

### Gospel, Matthew 16:13-19

Today's Gospel from Matthew, appropriately, is the story of Peter's special position among the apostles and in the Church. He is given the name "Rock" (Peter) and is told that the Church of Christ will be built on him. He is entrusted with the keys of the kingdom of heaven, with the authority to bind and loose both here on earth and in heaven. The papacy is a marvelous gift of Christ to the Church!

*Notes and Commentary by Maryknoller James H. Kroeger, who has recently published [Walking with Pope Francis: The Official Documents in Everyday Language](#) (Orbis Books – 2023) and [Exploring Vatican II Treasures: Actors, Events, Insights](#), commemorating the sixtieth anniversary of the close of the Spirit-inspired Vatican II [1965-2025] (Faith Alive Books – 2024).*



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