



The Holy See

SOLEMNITY OF THE HOLY APOSTLES PETER AND PAUL

POPE FRANCIS

ANGELUS

Saint Peter's Square
Saturday, 29 June 2024

[[Multimedia](#)]

Dear brothers and sisters, *buongiorno!*

In the Gospel today, Solemnity of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, Jesus says to Simon, whom he named Peter, “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven” (*Mt 16:19*). This is why we often see Saint Peter depicted with two large keys in his hand, as in the statue here in this Square. Those keys represent the ministry of authority that Jesus entrusted to him at the service of all the Church. Because authority is a service, and authority that is not service is dictatorship.

Let us be careful, though, to understand well the meaning of this. Peter’s keys, in fact, are the keys of a Kingdom, which Jesus does not describe as a safe or a vault, but with other images: a tiny seed, a precious pearl, a hidden treasure, a handful of leaven (cf. *Mt 13:1-33*), that is, like something precious and rich, yes, but at the same time small and inconspicuous. To reach it, therefore, one does not need to activate mechanisms and safety locks, but to cultivate virtues such as patience, attention, constancy, humility, service.

Therefore, the mission that Jesus entrusts to Peter is not to bar the doors to the house, permitting entry only to a few select guests, but rather to help everyone find the way to enter, in faithfulness to the Gospel of Jesus. Everyone, everyone, everyone can enter.

And Peter did this throughout his life, faithfully, until his martyrdom, after having been the first to experience for himself, not without fatigue and with many setbacks, the joy and the freedom that come from the encounter with the Lord. He was the first to have to convert, and to understand that authority is a service, in order to open the door to Jesus, and it was not easy for him. Let us think: just after saying to Jesus, “You are the Christ”, the Master had to reproach him, because he refused to accept the prophecy of his passion and his death by the cross (cf. *Mt 16:21-23*).

Peter received the keys to the Kingdom not because he was perfect, no — he was a sinner — but because he was humble, honest, and the Father had given him sincere faith (cf. *Mt 16:17*). Therefore, entrusting himself to God’s mercy, he was able to support and fortify his brethren too, as had been asked of him (cf. *Lk 22:32*).

Today we can ask ourselves, then: do I cultivate the desire to enter, with God’s grace, into his Kingdom, and to be, with his help, its welcoming guardian for others too? And to do so, do I let myself be “polished”, softened, modelled by Jesus and his Spirit, the Spirit who dwells in us, in each one of us?

May Mary, Queen of the Apostles, and the Saints, Peter and Paul, through their prayers, grant us to be guides and support to one another, for the encounter with the Lord Jesus.

After the recitation of the Marian Prayer, the Holy Father continued:

Dear brothers and sisters, I greet all of you, who have come on the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul, and I greet the people of Rome in a special way! Today I would like my greeting to reach all the inhabitants of Rome, all of them, together with my prayer: for families, especially those who struggle the most; for the elderly, those who are loneliest; for the sick, the imprisoned, and those who for various reasons are in difficulty. I hope that everyone may share the experience of Peter and Paul; namely that Jesus Christ’s love is life-saving and that it drives us to give our life to others and to do so with joy, with gratuitousness. Life cannot be sold.

I greet the Canons Regular of the Immaculate Conception, gathered in Rome for their General Chapter; and I congratulate them on the great flower display organized by the “Pro Loco” group in Piazza Pio XII, created by master florists from various parts of Italy. Thank you, thank you very much! I can see them from here, they are beautiful!

I think with sorrow of the brothers and sisters who are suffering because of war: let us pray for all the populations wounded or threatened by fighting, that God may free them and support them in the struggle for peace. And I give thanks to God for the release of the two Greek Catholic priests. May all the prisoners of this war soon return home! Let us pray together: may all the prisoners

return home.

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

Arrivederci!