

June 28, 2009

Celebration of Feast of Peter and Paul

Fr. Larry Richards

As we have said in the beginning of Mass, in the Diocese of Erie we celebrate the Feast of St. Peter and Paul as we bring the close, the Pauline year, the year of St. Paul. Most other diocese in the United States celebrates just a regular Sunday. But, our Bishop wanted up to focus on Paul specifically today. And so we do. And if you have ever looked at the life of Paul, if you reflected on him this last year, you could sum up his life in about two things. The first is that he loved Christ with all of his heart. And he desired to know Christ more and more intimately, more than any of the other apostles. You can say in some way or another because he sits there and of all the people he didn't hear Jesus give a homily, never saw Jesus perform a miracle. But he had this experience of Christ that changed everything. And that same thing that happened to Paul can happen to us. He wrote most of the New Testament. And yet he never had the other experiences, the physical experience of Christ. But he had the resurrection experience of Christ that we all can have.

And the second thing, we can come back to the first in a moment. But the second thing that he did was he wanted to bring everyone he knew to Christ. It was that simple. He just wanted everybody to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. And so as we look at Paul, he is telling us how we need to be living our life. First of all, do we have this great awesome love for God? If someone were to look at you and me, what could they say about us, "That person loves Jesus Christ." Someone at work, would they even know you were a follower of Christ? What could they say about you, just think about it? What would they say about you if someone was talking about you? And there will be good things and there will be bad, just like there are good and bad things when people talk about me. Not that anybody ever talks about me. But could they say that you are in love with Jesus Christ? Would that be one of the things that somebody would say about you? That you are madly in love with Jesus Christ? Because that is what they said about Paul, he was madly in love with Christ. And so that has to be the thing for us.

The second thing is that we have that desire to bring people to Christ. One of my old kids now is a priest three years already, kind of freaks me out. He was just assigned by the bishop last week. We were down at Emmaus all week. And he was just assigned to become campus minister and teacher at a Catholic high school at St. Mary's PA. So he talked to me and says, "Ok, Father, do you have any words of wisdom for me?" I said, "Sure do." As always I'd have something to say. And he says, "What should I do?" I said, "There is only one thing you need do. That is to desire to bring every one of those students to Christ. Bring the faculty to Christ. That is all that has to matter." That we bring people to Christ because again, is that a part of what people do, what they desire, do we have a desire to bring everyone we know to Christ? When I taught at Prep that is all I ever wanted. As I have become pastor, that is all I ever want. Is that everyone comes to know Christ and they surrender their life to Him, why? So that we can live forever. And don't you want everyone to live forever? Those of you who have kids, you're number one job isn't to sit there and make them great lawyers or doctors or whatever, fill in the blank.

Make millions and millions and millions and millions of dollars and go to hell anyways. Then you failed as a parent. Your number one thing must be to bring your children to Christ, to get them to heaven, to experience everlasting life.

And the way you do that not just with your kids, your husband, your wife, people you work with, your family, your extended family, everybody you meet, that you have to have that desire to bring people to Jesus Christ. And so the best way we can do that is the same way Paul did it. He was crucified with Christ. So that he no longer lived, but Christ lived inside of him. And so what that means is when you and I allow ourselves to be crucified is that we are showing that we love Christ because we give our life for Him as He gave His life for us. We allow ourselves to be crucified, then we live for others, and we let Christ bring them to Him, Himself. We bring them Christ, because we are the presence of Christ but what we need to do is deny ourselves. What we need to do is get out of the way. So, get out of the way. May each of you know His love today and forever and ever, amen.