

ST. PETER AND PAUL – A – JUNE 29, 2014

THE FEAST OF STS. PETER AND PAUL IS ALWAYS CELEBRATED ON JUNE 29TH. OF COURSE, IT IS A CELEBRATION AND REMEMBRANCE OF THE LIFE AND MARTYRDOM OF THESE TWO MEN WHO WERE SO SIGNIFICANT IN THE EARLY HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY. IF YOU GO TO ROME AND ST. PETER'S SQUARE YOU WILL SEE BOTH STATUES BOLDLY FLANKING THE ENTRANCE TO ST. PETER'S BASILICA IN ROME.....

THE LAST TIME THIS FEAST WAS CELEBRATED ON A SUNDAY WAS JUNE 29TH, 2008

SINCE IT'S ONLY BEEN SIX YEARS I'M SURE EVERYONE WILL REMEMBER MY HOMILY AT THAT TIME....

INITIALLY, I HAD FALSELY BELIEVED THAT THE TWO STATUES IN THE REAR OF THE CHAPEL MIGHT HAVE BEEN PETER AND PAUL....

BUT DEACON GREG SET ME STRAIGHT...

THOSE STATUES ARE JOSEPH AND JOHN....

BECAUSE OF THEIR CLOSENESS TO MARY

AT LEAST WE DO HAVE PETER ON THE WINDOW TO MY LEFT - THE ONE WITH THE KEY.....

SO TODAY WE CELEBRATE THE LIVES OF THESE TWO MEN - PETER AND PAUL

THEIR LIVES SAY A LOT TO US ABOUT OUR CHURCH AND OUR LOVING GOD AND WHAT IT MEANS TO BE HUMAN AND FOLLOW CHRIST....

AND LET ME ACKNOWLEDGE HERE THAT I AM RELYING A LOT ON RICHARD ROHR AND HIS DESCRIPTIONS OF THESE TWO MEN IN HIS BOOK ON VARIOUS MEN IN THE BIBLE..... "SOUL BROTHERS" IN THE GOSPEL STORY IN WHICH YOU HAVE A CAST OF UNLIKELY AND UNPIOUS PEOPLE - PETER STANDS OUT - HE IS THE ONLY ONE JESUS CALLS A DEVIL AND HE IS THE ONLY ONE WHO DIRECTLY DENIES JESUS AND HIS FIRST RESPONSE IN EVERY ENCOUNTER IS ALMOST ALWAYS WRONG...

YET HE IS CLEARLY THE ONE WHOM JESUS SELECTS AS THE SPOKESMAN AND THE SYMBOL OF THE WHOLE NEW ENTERPRISE HE IS STARTING... SO WHAT'S GOING ON...

PETER IS CLEARLY EVERYMAN AND EVERYWOMAN....

PETER IS HUMANITY AT ITS MOST LOVABLE, DISHEARTENING BEST...

PETER HAS A WORKING-CLASS, UNEDUCATED MAN'S RESPONSE TO LIFE...

HE DOESN'T FILTER THINGS THROUGH HIS HEAD....

HE JUST RESPONDS INSTINCTIVELY.....

WHAT A SHAME THAT WE HAVE TAKEN THIS IMMENSELY HOPEFUL

SYMBOL OF US ALL AND DRESSED HIM UP IN A TIARA AND LACE....

JESUS CERTAINLY GAVE PETER TO US TO AFFIRM OUR OBVIOUS

FALLIBILITY AND OUR VERY USABLE FAILURES AND WE HAVE TURNED

HIM AROUND AND MADE HIM "INFALLIBLE" - THE ONE THING HIS LIFE

NEVER EXEMPLIFIES

WHAT A TRAGEDY OF HISTORY THAT HE HAS BECOME A SOURCE OF ARGUMENT AND DIVISION INSTEAD OF A SYMBOL OF HUMAN AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION....

FORTUNATELY, WE HAVE A POPE TODAY IN FRANCIS WHO REJECTS ALL THE REGAL TRAPPINGS AND IS SUCH A SYMBOL OF TRANSFORMATION - AS HE ACKNOWLEDGES HIS SINFULNESS AND HIS IDENTIFICATION WITH POOR, THE MARGINALIZED...

BECAUSE ON A PERSONAL LEVEL, PETER IS A GREAT STATEMENT OF HOW WE ALL COME TO GOD....

AND IT IS SURPRISING - AND FOR MANY OF US A SHOCK AND EVEN A DISAPPOINTMENT....

WE CLEARLY COME TO GOD - NOT BY DOING IT RIGHT BUT IRONICALLY BY DOING IT WRONG

THIS MESSAGE IS CLEAR IN ALMOST EVERY BIBLICAL CHARACTER - WITH THE POSSIBLE EXCEPTION OF MARY...

PETER'S FIRST RESPONSE IS ALMOST ALWAYS INCORRECT...

LIKE LPETER, UNTIL THE COCK CROWS, WE DO NOT GET IT....

UNTIL THE COCK CROWS, WE DO NOT SEE GOD...

UNTIL THE COCK CROWS, WE DO NOT KNOW OURSELVES....

WE ARE SAVED IN SPITE OF OURSELVES...

GOD DOES NOT LOVE PETER BECAUSE PETER IS GOOD....

GOD LOVES PETER BECAUSE GOD IS GOOD....

*PETER FINALLY SEES THAT AND IT MAKES HIM FALL IN LOVE WITH
JESUS...*

PETER'S STORY IS OUR STORY.....

PAUL IS OUR OTHER FIGURE TODAY.....

*“NEXT TO JESUS, PAUL IS THE MOST PROMINENT PERSON IN THE NEW
TESTAMENT. OF ITS 27 BOOKS, 13 ARE LETTERS ATTRIBUTED TO PAUL.
MORE THAN HALF OF THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES IS DEVOTED TO
PAUL’S CONVERSION AND HIS APOSTOLIC ACTIVITIES IN SPREADING THE
GOOD NEWS ABOUT JESUS AROUND THE MEDITERRANEAN WORLD”.*

(AMERICA, JUNE 23-30, 2008. P.46)

*CLEARLY, LIKE PETER, PAUL ALSO COMES TO GOD BY DOING IT
WRONG....HE INITIALLY, PERSECUTES THE CHRISTIANS.....*

BUT THEN HAS A CONVERSION EXPERIENCE....

*IT IS THE FAITH OF THESE TWO MEN UPON WHICH JESUS CHRIST BUILDS
HIS CHURCH.....*

*PETER, WHO HAD DENIED JESUS THREE TIMES AND PAUL, WHO HAD
PERSECUTED THE CHURCH..*

*ULTIMATELY, THOUGH THESE TWO MEN - DESPITE THEIR FAILURES OR
PERHAPS BECAUSE OF THEIR FAILURES CAME TO BELIEVE IN THE
PERSON OF JESUS CHRIST - HIS MESSAGE AND HIS DIVINE POWER
THAT SAME FAITH THAT PETER CONFESSED AND THAT PAUL
MAINTAINED IS THE FAITH HANDED ON TO US - BY WHICH WE ARE BUILT
AND BY WHICH WE BUILD THE CHURCH TODAY.*

***LET US PRAY TODAY FOR CONFIDENCE THAT - LIKE PETER AND PAUL -
WE CAN INDEED COME TO GOD BY DOING IT WRONG INITIALLY - AND
OFTEN THAT IS THE MOST SURE WAY - THAT WE COME TO GOD.....
IF WE INDEED MAINTAIN AND EVEN GROW IN OUR CONFIDENCE, IN OUR
FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS AND HIS POWER IN OUR LIVES, HIS MESSAGE...
SO, WE CAN SAY WITH PETER, "YOU ARE CHRIST, THE SON OF THE LIVING
GOD" AND AT THE END WE CAN SAY WITH PAUL.... "I HAVE FOUGHT THE
GOOD FIGHT, I HAVE FINISHED THE RACE, I HAVE KEPT THE FAITH"***