

PETER AND PAUL, APOSTLES

CYCLE B

Acts 12: 1-11

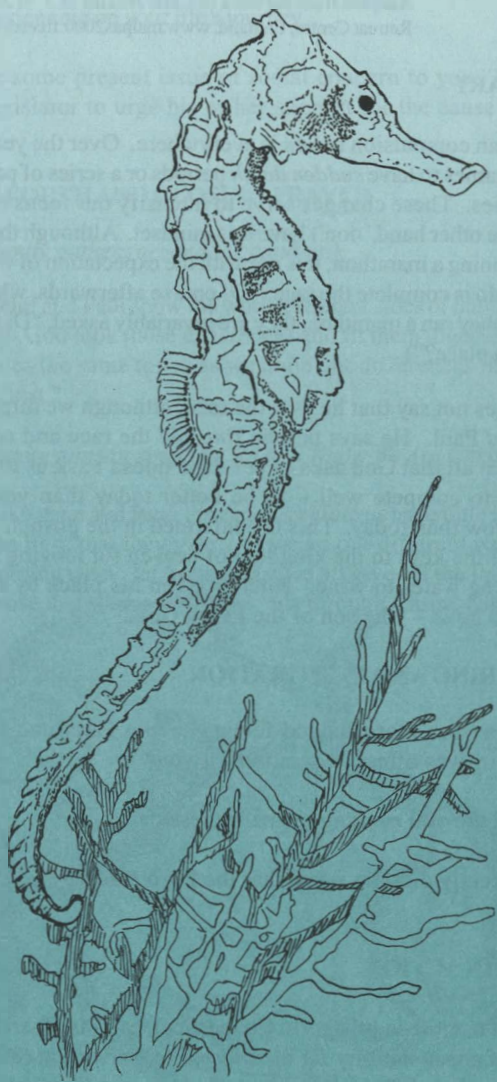
Timothy 4: 6-8, 17-18

Matthew 16: 13-19

OPENING PRAYER

(Two candles, as different from one another as possible, stand in the gathering place. As the session begins, the candles are lighted. The leader calls members to quiet themselves, to slow their breathing, to breathe out tension and breathe in Christ's peace. The community pauses for some minutes in silence. The leader and three members introduce the prayer that follows.)

- Leader:** This week's feast brings together the apostles Peter and Paul. The irony that they have been thus joined together must make them laugh. They know better than we that our God is a surprising God.
- I:** Our God can use a Galilean fisherman or a citizen of the Roman Empire. Our God can use the leader of the disciples or God's one time persecutor. Our God can use a slow learner who stumbled often or a quick mind who had a mighty fall.
- II:** God used them both despite their disputes: "When Peter came to Antioch I opposed him to his face." God used them both despite their many differences of culture, style and temperament.
- III:** Through God they were united in martyrdom and the reverence of Christians throughout the ages. Together, their blood anointed the stones of Rome and made it a new capital of a very different "empire".
- All:** Peter and Paul, pray for us,
As we pray for a church open to Peter's truth and Paul's questioning;
As we pray for strong leadership and impassioned argument;
As we pray, Spirit of God, break into our too neat plans and



invite us anew to open our hearts. Amen.

Adapted from the work of Chris Jenkins SCJ, St Joseph's
Retreat Centre, England. www.malpas2000.freeseerve.co.uk

COMMENTARY

The American compulsion to *win* is everywhere. Over the years we have changed our games to have *sudden death* periods or a series of penalty shots to break the ties. These changes serve to intensify our focus on *winning*. Joggers, on the other hand, don't have this mindset. Although they often set the goal of running a marathon, it is not with the expectation of winning. All most want to do is complete the race. (Of course afterwards, when they tell someone that they ran a marathon, they are invariably asked, "Did you win or where did you place?")

Saint Paul does not say that he *won* the race, although we might since we call him *Saint* Paul. He says that he *finished* the race and completed it well. Isn't that all that God asks of us? God doesn't ask us to be perfect. God asks us to compete well – to be better today than yesterday and better tomorrow than today. This is confirmed in the gospel. Jesus does not give Peter the keys to the kingdom of heaven for moving a mountain or for changing water to wine. Peter is given his place by recognizing Jesus for who he is – "the son of the living God."

FAITH SHARING AND INTEGRATION

- ◆ Reflect on your thoughts and feelings about Peter and Paul. What about their lives offers inspiration for you?
- ◆ How well are you *running the race* these days?
- ◆ When recently did you sense that the Lord stood by you to give you strength?

RESPONSE IN ACTION

- ◆ Reach out to those in prison. Contact your diocesan office to inquire about its efforts in regard to prison ministry and to seek out what opportunities might be available for you to participate in this corporal work of mercy.

- ◆ Set a goal for an extended walk or run. It's good for the body and the soul. Let yourself experience the walk or run as a metaphor for what you are experiencing on your life's journey.
- ◆ Choose some present issue of social concern to you. Write to your state legislator to urge his or her support for the cause that you care about.

SENDING FORTH AND CLOSING PRAYER

(The community gathers around the candles.)

Leader: Peter and Paul show the world different sides of human experience, but God took those differences and fit them together as one. God does the same today as we unite our differences in “the Body of Christ.”

(The community joins in singing, “They’ll Know We Are Christians”. The song may be found on the Internet. When the song is complete, the leader prays as follows on behalf of all.)

Leader: Like Peter and Paul, the candles before us have little in common but the light that they give. As we go our different ways during the coming week, let us pray that we give off the light of Christ to those we meet. We ask this through Christ, Our Lord.

All: Amen