

Saints Peter and Paul, Apostles

During this liturgical year, because of the happenstance of this year's calendar — June 29 falling on a Sunday — what would normally have been the Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time is instead the Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul, Apostles. (This phenomenon of an important liturgical day replacing the Sunday in Ordinary Time occurs quite often in this liturgical year: it will happen again on September 14, when the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross replaces the Twenty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time; when the Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed [All Souls] on November 2 replaces the Thirty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time; and when the Feast of the Dedication of the Lateran Basilica replaces the Thirty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time on November 9. *This is the stuff that makes liturgy fun for liturgy nerds like me!*)

What a great opportunity to commemorate and celebrates these two great Saints, Peter and Paul! We know that Peter became the first bishop of Rome and died there in 67 A.D. by being hanged upside down on a cross. Paul was converted about the year 34 A.D. and spent the better part of his Christian life as a missionary to Cyprus and Asia Minor, where he founded a number of Christian communities. In 60 A.D. he came as a prisoner to Rome, was released two years later, did more missionary work, was again taken prisoner in Rome, and was beheaded in 67 A.D. toward the end of Nero's rule.

Perhaps the significance and importance of these two great Saints is best and most succinctly summed up in the text of the Solemn Blessing that may be used at the end of Mass for this day. The prayer refers to Peter's "saving confession" (remember how he declared Jesus to be "the Christ" in response to the Lord's question, "Who do you say that I am?") and to that profession as "the solid rock of the Church's faith" on which our own faith rests. The prayer goes on to remind us of "the tireless preaching of Saint Paul" and how he won "brothers and sisters for Christ," a missionary responsibility in which we all share through our baptism. Thus, we pray on this day that we may all reach the Kingdom of God "by the keys of St. Peter and the words of St. Paul."

Liturgical Music Institute

All this week I will be privileged to teach a course in the Liturgical Music Institute, a week-long program of study and liturgical formation for musicians, for liturgical ministers, and for others interested in liturgical theology. It is an excellent program put together and run by our own Director of Music, Chris Ferraro (he gets to be my boss for one week! I hope he treats me the same way I treat him...*wait a minute...now I'm really in for it!*)

I will be teaching a course in liturgical documents, and some of our own parishioners are attending all or different parts of the Institute, which encompasses opportunities for spiritual formation and retreat, academic courses, and development as a liturgical musician. I am grateful to Chris for the opportunity to do this, as it keeps my hand in teaching liturgy, which I did for so many years as a seminary professor and which I miss very much. It's taking place at the Seminary of the Immaculate Conception in Huntington.

I'm sure this one-week program will again be offered next year, and while a component of it is focused on liturgical musicians, there are other components that are applicable for anyone who is active as a liturgical minister or who simply wants to learn more about the liturgy. Keep it in mind when we advertise it next year! We would love to have a strong OLPH showing!

Children's Liturgy of the Word taking a break for the summer

Today is the last Sunday for the Children's Liturgy of the Word before we take a break for the summer. The Children's Liturgy of the Word became an instant hit as evidenced by the number of children participating and the enthusiasm and commitment of all the adults and older children who offered themselves to make it happen. I wish to offer a sincere and heartfelt **THANK YOU** to all who have helped to make the Children's Liturgy of the Word such a success — homilists, shepherds, readers, musicians, those who assisted with the children's bulletins, and, of course, anyone who worked behind the scenes in any way, doing their part to make sure all ran

smoothly. I am grateful as well to the children who participated so faithfully.

Rest assured: the Children's Liturgy of the Word will return in the Fall! Watch for it!

Independence Day and Freedom of Religion

This Friday is the Fourth of July, Independence Day, and I don't need to remind you that the day has much deeper meaning than just the barbecues and pool parties we will engage in to celebrate the day. It's the 238th birthday of our great country as we celebrate our independence. We can never take the blessings of this great land for granted, for they are blessings of freedom and abundance that have been given to us from God. Perhaps this year, though, it is especially pertinent to remember that the freedoms enshrined in our system of government do indeed come from God, and therefore cannot and must not be compromised.

We are right now in the midst of the **Fortnight for Freedom** in this country. Religious freedom is our First Amendment right, and I am so grateful that we have a **Catholics for Freedom of Religion** group here at OLPH. You have read and will continue to read in the bulletin, under the "Social Ministry" section, about the witness and activities of this group. I urge you to join them at their activities and to support this group; consider becoming a member.

Freedom of conscience and of religion is a gift from God to all His children. As Catholics and Americans we are blessed to have a Constitution and Bill of Rights ensuring that each citizen may practice any religion, or even no religion, as she or he chooses. Yet, nowadays we are seeing cultural and legal attacks on religious freedom in schools, businesses, the military and religious institutions, including the Catholic Church. The Bishops of the United States have urged us, "We need to speak frankly with each other when our freedoms are threatened. Now is such a time...we address an urgent summons to our fellow Catholics and fellow Americans to be on guard, for religious liberty is under attack, both at home and abroad."

Look for further information about the Fortnight for Freedom, and Catholics for Freedom of Religion, in our bulletin, or at the

diocesan website www.drvc.org or at the website www.usccb.org which is the website of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Deacon Andrew Garnett

I take this opportunity to offer words of prayerful congratulations and support to Andrew Garnett, the seminarian who spent his summer formation assignment with us last summer, as he is ordained to the Diaconate next Sunday, July 6, at his home parish of St. Dominic's in Oyster Bay (you have seen the information about it in our bulletin). The entire parish family pledges our prayerful support to Andrew in his upcoming final year of formation for priesthood, and we look forward to sharing with him next year when he is ordained a priest. We know that Andrew will always carry OLPH in his heart!

Summer Time at OLPH

Isn't summer time great? It's my favorite time of year! I hope we all get the chance to allow the living to be a little easier in the summer months. At the same time, OLPH will continue to provide some great opportunities for participation in the life of the parish and for faith development: Vacation Bible Camp; Summer Evening Prayer; and even adult education courses! So, by all means, take it easy, find some time for rest, relaxation and vacation...but make sure you still come to Mass each weekend! (There's no vacation from our Sunday obligation!) While you're at it, keep an eye on the summer activities and what have become summer traditions at OLPH and, if you are not away somewhere on vacation, make sure you join us for some great summer fun at OLPH. *Ohhh....those su-ummer ni-i-i-ights... (at OLPH, of course...)* (Kudos to those who get this last reference and who can "tell me more, tell me more...")

Pastor's Column Going on Hiatus

One thing that will be taking a break this summer is this Pastor's Column. As you know, we priests will be taking vacation time at various times during July and August, so Fr. John, Fr. Ethel and I will all be away for varying periods throughout those two months. I will also be taking my annual retreat time starting at the end

of this week. So, while none of us will be gone the whole summer (we'll be here for some weeks and gone for others), it works out better for me to take a break from this column during the upcoming weeks, as I did last summer. I'll start writing again at some point late August or early September, and will, of course, notify you if something urgent about which you must be immediately informed occurs. In the meantime, I'll see you here during the weeks I'm not on vacation.

In conclusion...

Together, let's aim high in Christ.
Together, let's bring out the best in each other.
Together, let's be the best we can be in Christ.

And let's always remember: LOVE IS A GIFT.

Sincerely,