

Rev. Fr. Leonard Goffine's
The Church's Year

THE FEAST OF OF SS. PETER AND PAUL, APOSTLES

June 29



PETER, formerly called Simon, from Bethsaida in Galilee, was a son of Jonas and a brother of Andrew, by whom he was brought to Christ. After the great draught of fishes, when our Lord said to him and Andrew: Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men, Peter followed the Saviour constantly, from whom he received the most tender proofs of love. Peter was present when Christ appeared in His glory on Mount Thabor, when He raised the daughter of Jairus to life, and when He sweat blood in the agony on Mount Olivet. Peter was also present at the miraculous draught of fishes, which was a figure of the multitudes which he was to bring, by means of the holy Gospel, to the kingdom of God, for Christ called him a fisher of men, and afterwards, because Peter recognized and professed Him to be the Son of the living God, Christ named him Peter, made him the head of the apostles and of the entire Church, made him His vicar and visible representative upon earth, promising to build His Church upon him as upon a rock, gave him the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and commanded him to feed His lambs and His sheep. Peter loved our Lord above all things; because of his love he wished to remain with Christ upon Mount Thabor to prevent Him from suffering, and in his love desired to die with Christ. He certainly showed the greatest courage when Christ was taken, following Him even into the house of Caiphas. But alas, the instability of man! There Peter three times denied the Lord. But the look of forgiving love which Jesus cast upon him, forced from him

tears of the deepest contrition. He atoned for his denial by suffering much for Christ. Under the Emperor Nero he was crucified for his faith at Rome, and by his own request with his head downwards, because he did not consider himself worthy to die like Christ.

Oh! that all sinners would seek by such penance to turn their evil into good!

PRAYER TO ST. PETER. O God, who from a poor fisherman hast made St. Peter prince of the apostles and head of Thy Church, we beseech Thee through his intercession to make us true lambs of Thy flock. Grant, that we may hear his voice, follow his doctrine, and walk in his steps, until we reach that happy pasture where the Good Shepherd, Thine only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, whom St. Peter represented on earth, reigns with Thee and the Holy Ghost forever. Amen.

SKETCH OF THE LIFE OF ST. PAUL

PAUL, before his conversion called Saul, of the tribe of Benjamin, was born at Tarsus in Cilicia, and was a pupil of Gamaliel. As he had the most zealous attachment for the Jewish law, he was exasperated against the Christians. However, when hastening to Damascus to persecute them, he was converted by the Lord on the way and called to be an apostle. [*See the Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul.*] His unwearied labors in the vineyard of the Lord after his conversion, the sufferings which he endured upon his apostolic journeys, and the dangers and persecutions through which he passed in different countries, cannot be described. The zeal and constancy with which he confessed and preached the faith, though in chains and fetters, though scourged and beaten, in hunger and thirst, and through innumerable dangers, are almost incredible. He was so humble that he regarded himself as the least of the apostles, and thanked God fervently that He considered him worthy to suffer for His sake. After he had fought a good fight and finished his course, having everywhere zealously preached the faith, and still more zealously practiced it, he won the crown of justice. On the same day and at the same place in Rome, in which Peter was crucified, he was beheaded, by command of the Emperor Nero. Thus God tries and rewards true virtue. Paul in his life, as after death, worked numberless miracles; even his handkerchief, like St. Peter's shadow, healed sickness and expelled devils. He had so deeply impressed the name of Jesus in his heart, that it was almost continually on his lips, for "out of the fulness of the heart, the mouth speaketh."

Would that we loved Jesus as St. Paul loved Him, then we would, like St. Paul, be ready to do and suffer much for Him.

PRAYER TO ST. PAUL. O St. Paul, chosen vessel of the Lord, who didst carry the name of Jesus to kings and heathens, who didst suffer so much for Christ, and wast never allured from the love of Him: like a brave soldier of Christ, thou hast fought a good battle, a zealous teacher, thou hast preached far and wide the true faith, and the just and merciful God has, therefore, rewarded thee with the crown of justice: pray to God for me, that I who because of my sins am an instrument of wrath, may become an instrument of honor, adorned with the Christian virtues, with which thou art already decorated. Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Introit of the Mass consists of Peter's words, spoken after his deliverance from the prison at Jerusalem: Now I know in very deed that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered

me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews. (*Acts* xii. 11.) Lord, Thou hast proved me, and known me: Thou hast known my sitting down and my rising up. (*Ps.* cxxxviii.) Glory be to the Father, &c.

COLLECT O God, who hast sanctified this day by the martyrdom of Thy blessed Apostles Peter and Paul: grant unto Thy Church, that as from them it received the first teachings of religion, so it may in all things follow their holy precepts. Thro'. &c.

EPISTLE (*Acts* xii. 1 — 11.) in those days, Herod the king stretched forth his hands to afflict some of the Church: and he killed James the brother of John with the sword. And seeing that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to take up Peter also. Now it was in the days of the azymes. And when he had apprehended him, he cast him into prison, delivering him to four files of soldiers to be kept, intending after the pasch to bring him forth to the people. Peter therefore was kept in prison. But prayer was made without ceasing by the Church unto God for him. And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains: and the keepers before the door kept the ^prison. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood by him, and a light shined in the room: and he striking Peter on the side, raised him up, saying: Arise quickly. And the chains fell off from his hands. And the angel said to him: Gird thyself, and put on thy sandals. And he did so. And he said to him: Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me. And going out, he followed him, and he knew not that it was true which was done by the angel: but he thought he saw a vision. And passing through the first and the second ward, they came to the iron gate that leadeth to the city: which of itself opened to them. And going out, they passed on through one street, and immediately the angel departed from him. And Peter coming to himself, said: Now I know in very deed that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews.

EXPLANATION I This Herod, a grandson of Herod the Great,, under whom Christ was born, and who murdered the holy Innocents, was a zealous Jew, and to please the Jews persecuted the Christians. He caused Peter to be imprisoned with the intention of having him publicly executed after Easter, for the amusement of the people. — How shameful it is to do wrong, to murder a man in order to amuse others! See how deeply the desire to please can lead into error! Take care to commit no sin for the sake of pleasing others; for he who seeks to please men cannot be a servant of Christ, says the Apostle Paul. II. The Church, that is, the priests and the faithful, prayed to God continually for the liberation of St. Peter, and their prayers were heard. — Let us pray for one another, especially for sinners, that God may free them from the chains of the evil one. III. Peter slept quietly in prison, for his conscience was at peace, and he confided himself to God's protection. — The innocent are calm in every peril and need, the bad alone have no peace. IV. God sent an angel to Peter, who told him to rise quickly, gird himself, put on his sandals, and follow him. — If thy guardian angel warns thee to rise from the sleep of sin, do so at once, return to thyself, like the prodigal son, break the bonds that bind thee to sin, gird thyself with the strong resolution to sin no more, put on thy shoes, that is, make the firm purpose to follow Christ.

(*The Gospel as on the Feast of St. Peter's Chair at Rome.*)

