

A Letter from Fr. Jerry Gunderson

June 29, 2025

Christmas is always December 25th, no matter what day of the week that is. Easter is always the First Sunday after the first full moon of spring. It can be as early as March or as late as April. Solemnities are days of the highest importance on the church's liturgical calendar, just after Christmas and Easter. They are usually assigned to a particular date and they may be celebrated on any day of the week. But when they are celebrated on a Sunday, they are given precedence over the usual Sunday Liturgy and its assigned readings and prayers. Such is the case with today's celebration of the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul: Apostles. It is celebrated annually on June 29th.

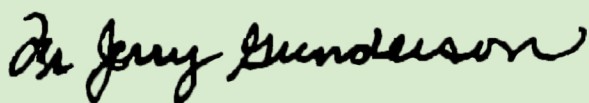
The Feast of Peter and Paul commemorates their martyrdom in Rome sometime between 64 and 67 AD. Peter was crucified upside down at his own request, as he did not consider himself worthy to die in the same manner as Jesus. Paul was beheaded, as he was a Roman citizen and thus exempt from crucifixion. Both Peter and Paul are considered founders of the church in Rome. The Pope usually presides at a special celebration on this solemnity at St. Peter's Basilica.

There is no scriptural account of the martyrdom of Peter and Paul. Rather the readings today express the importance of these apostles in the mission of preaching the gospel. Today's first reading tells of how Peter was spared by God to continue preaching the gospel. He was released from prison and continued preaching the gospel until he died. In the second reading 2 Timothy 4, Paul reflects on his impending death, expressing readiness for his departure and emphasizing his faithful service to God. He acknowledges the crown of righteousness awaiting him and others who love Christ's appearing.

One purpose served by my appointment to St. Patrick this past year was continuity of ministry during a time of transition. I certainly hope I am not headed for a proximate martyrdom or any martyrdom at all. Today I give thanks to God for letting me be of service to him this past year. It was good to discover that my previous experience was still of value to this local church. It was good to make new friends. I was inspired by your strong faith and your love for this parish.

I provided daily mass, baptized babies, anointed the sick, counselled the doubtful, forgave sinners, and prayed for the parish, the pope, bishops, and all the people of the church. In other words I got to practice my faith and to encourage you to practice your faith. I am also able now to see beyond my time here with the appointment of Fr Patrick. As a brother priest, I welcome his arrival.

As a young boy I saw the parish priests minister to families like ours. When my older brother was nearly killed in a car accident, a priest was there. When we experienced trauma, he was there. A seed was planted in me that grew into my vocation to the priesthood. Thank you for letting me share my priesthood with you.



Fr. Jerry Gunderson