



The Solemnity of Sts. Peter and Paul, transferred
June 26, 2022
Homily Notes
Very Rev. J. David Carter, JCL, JV

A week of solemnities and feasts.

Nativity of St. John the Baptist
Most Sacred Heart of Jesus
Immaculate Heart of Mary

Now we celebrate Sts. Peter and Paul, transferred from June 29 with the Bishop's permission, as our parish patronal feast day and the 132nd anniversary of the dedication of our church building.

The Quo Vadis tradition is the story of St. Peter's flight from the Emperor Nero's persecution of Roman Christians in the first century. As legend has it, Peter decided to flee Rome at the outbreak of the persecution, perhaps in fear, perhaps because he thought "the rock" should be somewhere safe so others could eventually find and cling to it, and to him.

Heading out the Via Appia, Peter meets Jesus, who is heading into the city of Rome to face the persecution. "Quo vadis, Domine," Peter asks – "Lord, where are you going?" "Romae, iterum crucifigi"

"I am going to Rome to be crucified again," Jesus answers – and disappears. At which point Peter turns back into the city to embrace his own martyrdom.

We also express unequivocal joy at the recent decision of the Supreme Court of the United States. The Bishops of the State of Tennessee, including our own, stated: "Together as the bishops of Tennessee, we thank the United States Supreme Court for its careful consideration of the constitutional issues surrounding abortion and we express our encouragement that it has ruled in favor of the right to life of the unborn."

This decision overturned the 1973 Roe vs. Wade that erroneously found a right to abortion of unborn children hidden in a right to privacy hidden in the penumbra and emanations of our nation's founding document and its amendments. This was bad law if there ever was law. It was the judicial imposition of policy and not a judgment on the law. The Justices in the majority opinion of Friday have very rightly argued that was, in fact, an erroneous decision based on bad jurisprudence. Instead of the Supreme Court usurping the role of lawmakers, they have now returned the issue to the people and their elected state legislators to determine the issue of regulating and even prohibiting the killing of a child in the womb.

This historical decision is the result of good, sound and just legal reasoning. It is also the answer to many prayers. Isaiah 49:15 - *Can a mother forget her infant, be without tenderness for the child of her womb? Even should she forget, I will never forget you.*

The Bishops of New York issued a statement that captured this best:

"We give thanks to God for today's decision of the United States Supreme Court in Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization. This just decision will save countless innocent children simply waiting to be born.

"On this historic day, our gratitude extends to the millions of heroic Americans who have worked tirelessly toward this outcome for nearly a half-century. Women and men, children and adults, believers and non-believers, people of every culture and background have advocated for life. They have been a charitable and compelling voice for the voiceless, and today, their voice has been heard.



“As Catholics, we have prayed and fasted, held vigils, offered Masses, and peacefully witnessed in these last five decades. We have joined others in educating schoolchildren, opening pregnancy care centers, walking with mothers, offering post-abortion counseling, and marching, year after year, to the United States Supreme Court to witness for life. Today, our voice has been heard.

“With the entire pro-life community, we are overjoyed with this outcome of the Court.”

However, the battle is not over. Even though we can take a moment to bask in the resurrection glow of victory over death, we can't let down our guard now or run away from our own way of the cross, with its suffering for love's sake in a spirit of faith.

My e-mail to the parish from this past week touched on this. Just like St. Peter in Rome, it should not be for us to be triumphalistic or too celebratory with this news, as there is still much work to be done. Simply declaring that it's not good to kill children in the womb for any reason is not a victory. It's just common-sense sanity. It is also not the same as providing alternatives to abortion and helping those who would otherwise have thought to murder the child in the womb. It belongs to us, the community of faith, to be responsible and responsive to the needs of many, especially those burdened with pregnancies that were unplanned or even as a result of violence. We are our brother's and our sister's keeper. We need to redouble our efforts for pregnancy help and assistance to mothers of all types, as well as be generous in the gift of adoption and all the many necessities of nurturing the life of a child. I saw a great example of this in a Facebook post from a parishioner where she stated: *“If you or anyone you know ever finds themselves struggling to find support, formula, childcare, financial aid, mentoring/ counseling, a family for a child to become part of, or any of the countless other needs of expecting or post-partum parents - regardless of how the pregnancy came about or any developmental difficulties faced - please know that you can reach out to me and know that I am willing to help and support you however I can.”* To quote the Mandalorian, “This is the way”.

We also need to be vigilant of our hearts as we respond to those who have disagreed with this reasonable, sane, and just ruling of the court. Not all are in a place to receive this as good news and many have even expressed rage at this. As far as concerns about reprisals, vandalism, or violence to the Church or people of faith, we have taken certain prudent measures to address this issue here at the parish. We have a Security Team who is aware and communicating with local and even national law enforcement. When they are available we will have uniformed police officers outside the church, and we are keeping our facilities secured as best we can. It is our hope that with our extra vigilance, we will be able to avoid any confrontations. But it is incumbent upon all of our parishioners and people of faith to respond to those who dissent with charity and kindness. We must love the sinner even if we hate the sin. This is our crucifixion moment. This is our Appian way. I ask all parishioners to remain calm and compassionate towards any who might want to protest or provoke us or disturb our peace. Let us make it our aim to be kind and to return insults with blessings and be lights in the darkness for the upright. They will know we are Christians by our love. We know how to define love rightly. Jesus Christ has defined it for us on the cross. Like St. Peter, let us not run away any longer from the call to true love. Let us return to the Rome that is our own personal cross so that we can then share in the glory of the resurrection with Him.

May Jesus Christ be praised!