

The Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul

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[Lectionary 591:](#)

Acts 12:1-11

Ps 34:2-3, 4-5, 6-7, 8-9

2 Tim 4:6-8, 17-18

Matt 16:13-19

Possible preaching themes:

- **Having vision from the first reading:** Peter has a vision that allows him to escape imprisonment. Our vision of faith allows us to navigate life, with Jesus Christ as our guide.
- **What fear does to the body from the Psalm:** Our fear blocks us from offering blessings to God. Recognizing what fear does to us, we can live by faith not fear.
- **Stone masonry from the Gospel:** With Peter as the Rock, Christ builds up the Church using each of us.

Possible scientific resources:

- **On “vision”**
 - A collection of downloadable essays on restoring vision to the blind from the journal *Transitional Vision Science & Technology*:
<https://tvst.arvojournals.org/issues.aspx?issueid=933682&journalid=179#issueid=933682>
 - The Science of Sight: An eye-opening presentation on the neuroscience of vision: a video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-PUoE5iUJfc>
 - Was it a vision or a walking dream:
<https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2014.00255/full>
- **Fear and the body:**
 - Five things you never knew about fear:
<https://www.nm.org/healthbeat/healthy-tips/emotional-health/5-things-you-never-knew-about-fear>
 - What happens in the brain when we feel fear:
<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/what-happens-brain-feel-fear-180966992/>

- Fear fosters flight: A mechanism for fear contagion when perceiving emotion expressed by a whole body: Identifies different body movements associated with each emotional state
<https://www.pnas.org/doi/epdf/10.1073/pnas.0407042101>
- **Stone Masonry Construction:**
 - Stone, the Original Green Building Material
<https://www.buildinggreen.com/feature/stone-original-green-building-material>
 - Resource that describes the materials used for stone masonry and different classifications of stone masonry <https://theconstructor.org/building/stone-masonry-construction-materials-and-classification/36306/>
 - Architectural Cornerstones: The Meaning, History, and Intent
<https://www.newstudioarchitecture.com/newstudio-blog/architectural-cornerstones>

Homily outline: Build My Church

- **Stone Masonry**
 - Stone masonry is a type of construction that uses stones and sometimes mortar to build foundations, floors, walls, arches, columns
 - It is generally agreed that this engineering practice is at least 6,000 years old
 - Great monuments created from stone include
 - The Great Pyramid of Giza (2589-2566 BCE)
 - The Parthenon (438 BCE)
 - The Roman Colosseum (72-80 CE)
 - The Great Wall of China (most of what we see today 1368-1644 CE)
 - The Taj Mahal (1648 CE)
 - Stones used are natural rocks such as granite, limestone, and marble ordinarily need to be quarried, cut and then “dressed,” or cut into the right size, shaped into the desired dimensions, and finished sometimes by being polished <https://theconstructor.org/building/stone-masonry-construction-materials-and-classification/36306/>.
- **Why is stone masonry so widespread and useful?**
 - Rock is a ubiquitous element in earth’s landscape, and makes up a great percentage of the earth’s surface, and the earth itself is geologically classified as a stony planet <https://pubs.naturalstoneinstitute.org/pub/2bbac4c9-9976-207c-cdb9-34962dc40706>
 - Stone is also one of the most durable and strongest materials for building, building materials.
 - The best building stones are celebrated for their hardness, toughness, and durability

- Stones are selected based on their availability and the importance of the structure

- **Saints Peter and Paul: foundational stones for building the Church**
 - We often have limited, even one-dimensional images of these two saints, e.g.,
 - St. Peter, whose name is derived from the Greek work for rock (*petra*) is easily characterized as head strong and someone who did not always understand the nuances of Jesus’ teaching
 - St. Paul is often portrayed as a fiery zealot, with his energies first focused on persecuting the followers of Jesus, who needed to be knocked off his high horse
 - These two did not get along very well, St. Paul himself documents their confrontation at Antioch (Gal 2:11-14), there is little evidence that their rift was healed. One could conclude that they did not fit together, and together they would make for a rocky foundation for the Church.
 - But despite differences in personality and perspective
 - It was the Spirit of Jesus that “cut and dressed” their respective missions and their hearts in the process, which is why they can be fit together in this singular feast celebrating their foundational roles in building the Church
 - St Peter: who was actually called “Satan” by Jesus (Matt 16:23), and would deny Jesus three times 3x (Luke 22:54-62) but would eventually repent and be missioned by Jesus to feed the Church (John 21:15-17)
 - St Paul: who persecuted the followers of Jesus and even approved of the stoning of Stephen (Acts 8:1), was eventually reconciled with the community he victimized, came to be recognized as an apostle in his own right, and transformed the early community with his mission to the Gentiles
 - While both were assailed and persecuted in turn for their apostolic work spreading the good news, like great stones they weathered the onslaught and their legacy has withstood the test of time.
 - St. Peter remembered as a great unifier and leader, who boldly proclaimed early on that Jesus was the Christ (Matt 16:16), the Rock on whom Christ built his church
 - St. Paul the boundary breaker and intrepid traveler who boldly moved outside of his Jewish context to bring the good news to Gentiles

- **Implications for us**
 - While some of our church buildings are made out of stone

- The church is not a brick-and-mortar reality but a flesh and blood community of believers
- Like the foundational stones of Peter and Paul, we always don't share the same views, or even personally get along
- But that doesn't mean we can't build community together
- In the process we get cut and quarried, "dressed" and polished, as they did in imitation of Jesus's own crucifixion and death
- We undergo this reshaping in order to build together this enduring legacy, of which Peter wrote: "You come to him as a living stone, rejected by people, but choice and precious in the sight of God, you also as living stones are being built up as a spiritual house" (1 Pet 2:4-5)

Tags: building, church, engineering, geology, stone

About the Preaching with the Sciences Initiative

A primary way Roman Catholics explore their faith and nourish their spirituality is by participating in Sunday Mass and actively engaging in the homily. However, few preachers explicitly connect faith or spirituality with science. The Preaching with the Sciences initiative, made possible by a generous grant from the John Templeton Foundation, gathers scientists and leading homileticians to explore the positive contributions science can make to preaching, and consequently contribute to more contemporary modes of believing. Such contributions are grounded in the rich imaginations that scientists bring to their work as well as in scientific discoveries that have a potential for revealing religious truths and even shedding new insight on ancient teachings and beliefs.

With guidance from world-renowned scientists with differing areas of expertise, a select number of homileticians will draft homily outlines for preaching key Sundays and feast days across the 3-year lectionary cycle. Over 100 homily outlines will highlight some of the way's sciences and the contemporary search for religious meaning can interface. These free homiletic resources have the potential to influence thousands of preachers seeking help each week in crafting sermons and helping to shape a scientifically informed religious imagination among future preachers.