

FAITH IS THE KEY TO ENTER HEAVEN SHAPED IN THE CROSS

Today, we celebrate the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul. In today's Gospel (Mt 16:13-19), Peter steps forward and professes his faith in Jesus, acknowledging Him as the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus is also asking us the same question today: *And you My parishioners, who do you say I am?* Would we profess our faith and say, "Jesus, we acknowledge that You are present in the Eucharist: in Holy Communion. Or, would we say: "We don't see or believe that You are in the Eucharist at all"? To not recognise Jesus present in the Eucharist, is to be blinded by sin. It is time to go to confession. Jesus clearly told us at the Last Supper, after He blessed the Bread, held it in His hands and said: "This is My Body". The sacrament of Holy Communion is not a symbol of His presence, but is Him truly present, as the living Bread brought to life on the Altar, in every Mass. To not believe this is to have a counterfeit faith. Jesus is not visible in human form anymore but in sacramental form. Jesus is the visible image of the invisible God made present today in our Catholic Church. I cannot enter heaven without Him, who is the Key. That key comes in the shape of the Cross which will unlock and free us from our graves someday. In baptism, we all receive the key of the Kingdom, in the form of our faith. The shape of the key of faith was marked on our foreheads at baptism.

FAITH IS OUR PASSPORT INTO HEAVEN/DON'T LOSE IT

Faith is the only thing that we can bring with us from this world to the next. It cannot be taken from us unless we throw it away or lose it. To lose it will have disastrous consequences on our Day of Judgement. We read in the first reading (Acts 12:1-11), how the evil Herod, who symbolises the devil, tried to lock Peter up in prison, in an attempt to stop him practicing his faith through preaching. It did not work, because Jesus sent an Angel to rescue and free him from the double chains and the watchful eyes of the soldiers. If we practice our faith and live our lives aligned to the divine will of God, then Jesus will free us from the imprisonment of the devil and save us from going to hell. St. Paul tells us today (2Tim 4:6-6.17-18) that he has already *being poured away as a libation*. This means that he has poured out his life for Christ in the Chalice of the Lord, the chalice of suffering, obedience and holiness. He faithfully offered his life to God. In *running the race to the finish* line and to have *fought the good fight to the end*, does not mean that he fought a terminal illness with dignity or self-belief. It means that he has fought the fight against the temptations of the devil, by keeping his faith. The race he refers to is his existence on earth, which is a race against time, in order to pick up the Trophy of eternal life, beyond the grave. If we long for the appearance of Christ in the Day of His Second Coming, then we will be prepared for that Day of Judgement, and will have nothing to fear. If we do not think of it and not prepare for it, then it will be a Day of disaster for the unprepared. The gift of faith helps prepare us for that Day. Many souls choose to replace the keys of heaven with the keys of hell, because they choose to live in sin. Pray for conversions.

God bless, Fr. Brendan.

