

The Feast of Saints Peter and Paul.

On Monday June 29th we will celebrate the patronal feast of parish with the great Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul. The two apostles have much in common. They were fundamental in the spread of the Gospel, they laid the foundations of the church and they were both martyred in the city of Rome. And so they share a common feast day.

This week we bring an end to the school year and unfortunately the young people who are graduating have not been able to celebrate this milestone in the traditional way, having to settle for drive-by salutations and virtual ceremonies. I was asked by the schools to make a contribution to the virtual ceremony. So earlier this month, with the help of our parish minister, Arden Ouellette, a video message was recorded. In that message I stood by our statue of St. Paul and reflected on St. Paul's life in my address. At that time we had just finished the Easter Season and I reflected on the life of St. Paul as is recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. During the Easter Season the first reading at mass normally comes from Acts.

I emphasized two points about St. Paul. First, before he experienced his conversion he was a privileged and gifted young man. He was a Roman citizen, which gave him special rights and privileges. He was well travelled and well educated. He had studied under the best rabbis in Jerusalem. However, on the road to Damascus, he encountered the Lord Jesus and forever his life was changed. He became an itinerant preacher of the Good News of Jesus Christ; he suffered poverty, hardship and persecution for the name of Jesus. But, he never looked back because he knew that nothing could separate him from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. As he writes in Romans, **“Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecutions, or famine, or nakedness, or peril or sword: No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.”** (Romans 8:35-37).

Secondly, I spoke about the conclusion to the Acts of the Apostles. The Acts ends with Saint Paul travelling as a prisoner to Rome where he is to stand trial before the emperor. The Acts concludes, **“He (Paul) lived there for two whole years at his own expense and welcomed all who came to him, proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.”** (Acts 28: 30-31) For Paul, Rome was not a place of freedom where he was able to work without hindrance. There he was imprisoned, tortured and executed. It was not so much that the sacred author of Acts was lying but he was acknowledging that Paul’s work, his mission could not be stopped. It was God’s work so nothing could stop it. Paul may have been hindered but God worked through Paul with all boldness.

So how did this reflection relate to the young graduates? This time of Covid-19 has upended our world. Like Saint Paul, on the road to Damascus, we have been knocked to the ground. Like Saint Paul we have lost our sight and do not know where we are going. We pray especially for our young people who have to face the future with so much uncertainty.

But we do we trust as St. Paul did? Despite what we have lost can we acknowledge that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus? Can we trust that despite the apparent hindrance and hardship that God’s will, God’s work, will still be accomplished in our lives?

This past Sunday was our first Sunday back to public worship in 3 months. I don’t think it is a big shock but the crowds were quite small. So despite the restrictions there is still room for those who may wish to come. We are observing our regular mass schedule for both Sundays and weekdays as well as our regular confession schedule. We have been asked not to leave the church open without supervision; the church will remain open for an hour or so after each weekday mass.

On Wednesday July 1st we will celebrate Mass for Canada Day at 9:00 am.

On the First Friday July 3rd we will have adoration of the Blessed Sacrament following the 9am Mass and concluding with benediction at noon.

For those who cannot join us we will be continuing to livestream the 9am Mass on Sundays via Facebook live. Make sure to join us for Mass on the parish Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/StPaulTheApostleBurlingtonOntario/>

If there are any minors in attendance at mass we have to receive a waiver from their parents for them to appear in the broadcast so unfortunately we cannot show you any faces during the livestream.

Again thanks to all who have continued to send the Sunday offerings to the parish. If you visit the parish website there are several options under the donate tab. The simplest is to use an interact e-transfer to paul22@cogeco.ca. Please make sure to include your envelope number or if you don't have envelopes make sure to include your address and phone number so that we can make sure you are accredited for income tax purposes.

We are planning to re-open the office on June 29 but with reduced hours. The office will be open to the public from 8:30 am to noon. You may also call to make other arrangements.

I would like to thank our volunteers who have stepped up to help usher people and sanitize the church after each Mass. We couldn't have done it without you.

