



So, if you ever want to make your life a little more interesting than it already is: in addition to your normal calendar on your refrigerator or kitchen wall or whatever digital device filled with all your appointments, and reminders to run all the adulting errands, not to mention the upcoming family birthday gatherings; if you ever want to add a little more clutter to your weekly and monthly layouts, find a church calendar; and not the one of a local congregation listing every meeting time and random group using the fellowship hall; find the wider church calendar, so that you know the all important detail that today is technically the Fifth Sunday after Pentecost, or so that you will know ahead of time when we get to the Twenty-Fifth Sunday after Pentecost eventually in November. But, also more seriously, that you don't forget when the First Sunday of Advent is, and when Ash Wednesday comes around to start the season of Lent, and just how early or late Easter will be...all those obviously important details that every clergy person believes you cannot live without knowing. But interspersed between those Sundays throughout a church calendar year will be these names of some rather important figures in our Jesus-following history portion, including from the beginning with Mary, Mother of Our Lord, who we celebrate in August, or Joseph, Guardian of Jesus, in the month March, or Mary Magdalene upcoming in July, but also some more relatively recent individuals like our beloved Martin Luther in February or Florence Nightengale, the founder of modern nursing, in August as well. All these individuals listed on the church calendar, in the midst the of our own comings and goings of our daily life, as a reminder of their continued collective impact hopefully not just on organized religion, but on our all-around faith journey as well.

And then, there's Peter and Paul, perhaps the most influential spiritual figures of the last two thousand years, only behind Jesus Christ himself. And as much as they each more than deserve their own day to themselves, they are both considered to be the pillars of the early and future church, both considered to be patron saints of Rome, and both believed to have died there as well, and so the wider church celebrates them together: both of whom whose impact continues to be felt in the way church goes about its daily proceedings, even though most of us may not have the faintest clue about their impactful role as we go about our daily comings and goings.

But if anything can be brought forth front and center from their connection nearly two millennia after their earthly ministry concluded; it's that, oddly enough, as important as these two precious children of God were, there were numerous moments in which the two of them absolutely could not stand each other. One in Peter who wanted newcomers to this whole following Jesus thing, to be a little more locked-in-step with the Jewish tradition, the ancestor faith that nurtured and sustained children of God for thousands of years before, and would only be fitting to carry on with the Messiah being an observant Hebrew individual as well. The other in Paul trying to be a little more accommodating to the newbies of the faith, trying to give in to a little more of the cultural trends at the time, trying to envision Jesus fulfilling the long-established traditions in a different, but still meaning-filled way. In their debates, they yell and lash out and not always with the most Christ-like language of love for each other. As if that not always pleasant interaction hasn't still been going on between us in the church only ever since Peter and Paul and forever before, because we human beings insist we have it all figured out based on all our experiences amidst the comings and goings about our life.

We're still figuring out how much we should stick with the before, while still being open to the after. We're still trying to somehow convert the Paul's to come over to the Peter's side, and also the reel in the die-hard Peter's to the Paul's side. And as much as we experience the yelling and the lashings out and the not-always-loving language from the digital screens and even during our routine errands-

runnings, and we hope that the church can somehow, someday, please be beyond that; far too often we still fall right into the not-so-pleasant human behavior. Because we are convinced we must fight this good fight with all of our might. We must finish this race with determination, as if the fate of the church and the world depends on it. We must keep this faith going, as if God depends on us: a faith that will persevere on our might and determination and our all-around strength in sometimes proving the other wrong, all the while leaving behind grace and mercy and compassion from far too many days on our almighty busy calendars.

And as much as we lift up Peter and Paul as the two significant pillars of the church, the reading reminds us to not overlook the God who stood by both of them, who gave them the needed holy, but humble, strength, including in the face of tragic death as they both boldly stood not for their own ego or pride, but because they boldly believed in the One who could give life in the face of death, the One who could give joy in the face of hatred, the One who could give compassion in the face of needing to defeat the other, the One who could save all of humanity from, oddly enough, against its very self. Peter and Paul may have been two absolutely incredible pillars in the midst of absolute chaos attempting to keep a movement of the Gospel going, but both would even more boldly proclaim the church's one and true foundation in Jesus Christ, her Lord, who will forever stand beside us, no matter the terrain the church traverses, and give us the strength, to be a source of grace and mercy and love in a world that far too often struggles to find any of it. So for that Greatest News of all still for the church and the whole world, and all the saints who proclaimed it with all they had to give, we most certainly give thanks to God, indeed! Amen!