

## THE FIRST READING IS FROM THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

In those days: Herod the king laid violent hands on some who belonged to the church. He killed James the brother of John with the sword, and when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. This was during the days of Unleavened Bread. And when he had seized him, he put him in prison, delivering him over to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending after the Passover to bring him out to the people. So Peter was kept in prison, but earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church.

Now when Herod was about to bring him out, on that very night, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries before the door were guarding the prison. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood next to him, and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him, saying, 'Get up quickly.' And the chains fell off his hands. And the angel said to him, 'Dress yourself and put on your sandals.' And he did so. And he said to him, 'Wrap your cloak round you and follow me.' And he went out and followed him. He did not know that what was being done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision. When they had passed the first and the second guard, they came to the iron gate leading into the city. It opened for them of its own accord, and they went out and went along one street, and immediately the angel left him. When Peter came to himself, he said, 'Now I am sure that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting.'

## THE WORD OF THE LORD

## THE RESPONSE TO THE PSALM IS

*From all my terrors the LORD set me free.*

I will bless the LORD at all times,  
praise of him is always in my mouth.  
In the LORD my soul shall make its boast;

the humble shall hear and be glad.

*From all my terrors the LORD set me free.*

Glorify the LORD with me;  
together let us praise his name.

I sought the LORD, and he answered me;  
from all my terrors he set me free.

*From all my terrors the LORD set me free.*

Look towards him and be radiant;  
let your faces not be abashed.  
This lowly one called; the LORD heard,  
and rescued him from all his distress.

*From all my terrors the LORD set me free.*

The angel of the LORD is encamped  
around those who fear him, to rescue them.  
Taste and see that the LORD is good.  
Blessed the man who seeks refuge in him.

*From all my terrors the LORD set me free.*

## THE SECOND READING IS FROM THE SECOND LETTER TO TIMOTHY

Beloved: I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me, but also to all who have loved his appearing.

The Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed, and all the Gentiles might hear it. So, I was rescued from the lion's mouth. The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

## THE WORD OF THE LORD

## THE GOSPEL ACCLAMATION .

Alleluia, alleluia.

You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church,  
and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Alleluia.

## A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

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At that time: When Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, 'Who do people say that the Son of Man is?' And they said, 'Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Simon Peter replied, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' And Jesus answered him, 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.'

## REFLECTION ON THE READINGS

I think if I had a biography written about me, I wouldn't like all my emails to be recovered. St Paul has had his letters read and recorded throughout history. I think he might have wished he hadn't said "These are stupid questions" to the Thessalonians when they asked about what they would look like in heaven, or saying "Are you Galatians mad?" when they had listened to a Jewish Christian who followed the old law. He did not have Taylor Swift's charm with her fans. Peter had his stropy moments with Jesus and avoided him at his time of crisis. Luke records how often Paul argues and loses friends Barnabas, John Mark and Demas only Luke stayed to write the story. So powerful was the message about Jesus that people stuck with the message even if they didn't like him. Paul did make friends with women quite easily, but it never came to anything. Peter was married and Paul refers to Apostles accompanied by their wives 1 Cor 9,5.

Peter left Jerusalem because of the persecution against Christians after he had steered the Church to welcome Greek converts not just Jews. He conferred with Paul to reassure him he was on the right track with his preaching. He's believed to have gone to Antioch, perhaps Corinth and then to Rome. Peter is given responsibility and respects others like James, Jesus' relative who looked after Jerusalem and at the Council of Jerusalem around AD 50, (Acts chapter 15), he listened to bring everyone together Jews and non-Jews alike to achieve unity.

They demonstrate what we feel about the Church, the message of eternal life, the way to get there and the sense of unity gathered around a unifying authority presided over by the successor of Peter. They are good if imperfect men like so many of us today.

Paul's legacy is his important letters, framing our faith after Jesus' ascension and carefully developing his teaching, listening to his communities even if they shocked him. Peter's legacy is the body of the Church what Pope Benedict called the great miracle that we witness and participate in.