

**Listen to the Heavenly Father**    Sts. Peter and Paul, apostles    Friday, June 29, 2018  
7:30 PM    Acts 12:1-11;    2 Tm 4:6-8, 17-18;    **Mt 16:13-19**    (Healing Mass)    (The truth is, the good news is, that we are all beautiful in the eyes of God.)

**“For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father.”**

Now this story of Peter’s confession is a big thing. It is the story of his being chosen to be the rock; **Peter is rock**, in Aramaic Cephas. “You are Cephas, and on this cephas I shall build my Church.” So we call him Peter. And today is the feast of Peter and St. Paul, **the two founding apostles of the Church of Rome**, which at that time was the center of the empire of the Mediterranean area, the most important city in the world.

Now at times this story has been interpreted in such a way as if Peter is being given some sort of prerogative or some sort of privilege. **This is not about prerogative or privilege; this is about service.** It’s about service that comes from, is built upon, the revelation of the heavenly Father. Now you might say, well isn’t that a privilege to receive revelation from the heavenly Father? Well yes, but it’s not that unique. In fact **that is what we are all called to.** And that is why Peter who is the first to speak this truth became the first of the apostles to guide and lead others to this very important truth that will set us free.

**But too much of the time we are not listening to the heavenly Father; we are listening to our own flesh and blood and the flesh and blood of people around,** our society, all the messages that are transmitted to us through normal means. Flesh and blood, includes our ears and our eyes and our brains, which are all wonderful gifts, but sometimes they convey to us false messages. And so many people grow up and they are not quite healthy human beings because they have eaten poison; **they have allowed their minds to be poisoned with false messages.** You are not good enough. You are not holy enough. You are not smart enough. These messages begin sometimes in our own homes **by well-meaning but misguided parents,** or these messages can come from, again, **our teachers,** who perhaps are expressing in a very inappropriate way their disappointment or their unhappiness with our performance. Or maybe they come because **we are always comparing ourselves to others,** wanting to be what we seem to think others are, wanting what we perceive others have or are, and thereby necessarily depreciating the gift that we are, depreciating and not appreciating, depreciating and **sometimes even maybe despising the very person that God has made us in his own image and likeness.** And then when our

lives seem to be heavy and dark and we feel burdened and afflicted, we don't realize our needs because we have been swallowing poisons, poisonous untrue messages.

**The truth is, the good news is, that we are all beautiful in the eyes of God.** We are all creations of God, and God wants to affirm and love and, yes, bring to fulfillment each one of us. But for that to happen **we have to cooperate.** That means often **we have to let go of a lot of our past.** And that is not easy. It is not easy to cut away all kinds of growth that isn't really good growth. But **it is possible because of God and because of the message of the heavenly Father: "You are my beloved; in you I am well pleased,"** even with all your, actually, deliberate sins, whereby you really have offended God and/or other people since they are all connected. You offend other people, you offend God; you offend God, you offend people. **We are all one, and so if we offend anybody, we offend even ourselves.** We need to acknowledge this and let go of that because God wants us to, and God wants us to because **God wants us to thrive. God even wants us to see ourselves as holy.** We may think that we are being humble and truthful when we talk about how bad we are or how sinful. Well actually that's flesh and blood thinking. That is not what the heavenly Father says.

**Peter became the prime apostle, the first apostle, precisely because he was the first to catch on.** He wasn't the smartest, and he wasn't the most beloved. The most beloved was the beloved disciple, who was right next to Jesus at the Last Supper, who even laid his head on Jesus' chest. That was Jesus' favorite among the males. And then he had another favorite: Mary Magdalene. But Jesus didn't make Mary Magdalene or the beloved disciple his prime apostle. He made Peter with all his faults, with his obvious disloyalty, with his lack of courage. He made him the first **because in spite of all that, he actually listened to the heavenly Father.** And if he saw that Jesus of Nazareth, outwardly just an itinerant preacher, if he saw him to be the anointed one, the holy Christ, then **he also saw that he was with him a son of God.**

**And if we listen to the heavenly Father, we will also see ourselves as sons and daughters of God.** And with no disrespect, we will recognize that even the families of our origin aren't that important. And if we have had a lot of problems growing up, that's not too important; we can just more or less forget about it, because **what we really have to do is integrate into our lives this message of the love of the Father for each of us.** That is the beginning of something really beautiful.