Tr4(2023)(Peter&Paul)

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**:

*"that, ...we may so pass through things temporal, that we... lose not the things eternal"* [Collect]

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Over the last two days the Church in our *Missal* has remembered St. Peter, on Thursday, and then yesterday St. Paul. St. Peter has a full set of Propers for the Day within the PB, but St. Paul's commemoration yesterday was not in the **PB**. This does not reflect favoritism for Peter over Paul, ala Italy over Spain in soccer. Rather, it reflects that St. Paul already had his "day" on the PB's calendar in late January.

On that date the Church commemorated his famous conversion on the road to Damascus. The reformers who put together the PB obviously were of the opinion that these two most famous of all Apostles should be treated identically. The Missal, while having two days for Paul, has four days for Peter: including commemorations of St. Peter's throne in Rome and in Antioch and of his chains.

For both of these men, Peter and Paul, experiencing the Risen Christ had changed their lives. They passed through the rest of their lives differently than before. Paul no longer was an angry Pharisee persecuting the Church, but became one against whom other Pharisees railed. Peter went from a fisherman to the Rock, the fisher of men. The change was permanent in them to the end.

At the end of their ministries, Paul's about 30 years and Peter's about 36 years, both men were executed. They were killed in Rome only a few months apart with Paul predeceasing Peter.

Paul, as a Roman citizen, received the quick death reserved by right for citizens: beheading. Peter, while a freeman, was not a citizen and thus Rome could execute him however they fancied. They decided that because he so loved this carpenter from Nazareth who thirty years earlier had been crucified that they would "honor" Peter by crucifying him too.

By legend, Peter said, before they raised him up that he did not deserve to die just as Jesus had. So they hung him upside down. But, both of these men passed out of their human lives as martyrs.

Our collect today talks of passing through life: may we so pass through things temporal that we lose not the the things eternal" is the goal for which we asked the Lord to mercifully rule over and guide us. I believe the phrase "pass through" is most helpful in guiding us as to the perspective or mindset that we need to maintain daily in life.

We are passing through this life on our way to a new life: life in heaven. Our destination is known, but we do not know of it firsthand because we have never been there.

We have heard about heaven from pastors and others, maybe read literature about it including glimpses of it from the Bible, such as in Revelation. We may have dreamt about it and pondered it. But we have not "experienced" it.

In that regard our journey is akin to what each of us almost certainly has done at least once in life, namely, driving to someplace we never before have been. Maybe our folks took us as a child to the Grand Canyon or the Redwoods, or for me to Yellowstone. (Back in the days when you could feed the bears marshmallows.)

Whenever we journey somewhere the first time we have only a vague idea of what to expect when we get there, and we usually don't want to get our hopes up too much. "Will the Canyon really be THAT grand?" or "will the redwoods really make me feel like an ant?", we may ask.

We can not know how we will react or feel when we finally reach our destination, but we know that along the way we also will be passing through other places unfamiliar and have absolutely no idea what all will happen along the way. But we know too that "getting there is half the fun".

And there is the rub, so to speak, namely: getting there. Ones car might break down and need a new fan belt in the middle of nowhere, as my parents experienced with three little kids in the back seat (in the days before seatbelts).

A detour might be needed because of a flood, another event we ran into, or a tornado or hurricane. Beyond these experiences slowing ones arrival to his destination there are the ever present side-trips which one just **has** to see, has to experience.

We may wonder at times: "will we EVER get there?" and worry that we might not. And, as we know, sometimes we **do** not. Between side trips and challenges we may have to stop and return home unsuccessful.

Passing through life on our way towards heaven we "pass through" many interesting spots and activities. While enjoying the fun along the way, we need to insure that we do not make them our destination. Spots along the way can be filled with interesting events, sights, and activities, but they can also stymie and slow us like a trap for the unwary.

Few even in Northern Colorado know that Cheyenne police look dimly on driving and talking on a cell phone. Drivers passing through do not know where police like to sit and hand out tickets.

Such things merely slow one down on a journey. Other things can stop one in his tracks, like getting a DUI or losing one's car keys, purse or wallet, say in a bar, or in places of even less repute. It is at times like these we remember advice our parents used to tell us over and over.

Life is full of distractions as they say. And distractions do just that: they distract; they keep us from what we otherwise would do, including often good deeds. Time spent watching TV or sitting in a bar is not time spent helping others or even necessarily **with** others.

Distractions and pleasures in life are meant to help restore or revive us, recharge us weak mortal creatures. They are meant to aid us along our way. But, they are not meant to become our goal or destination, to become our way. Our Way lies in following Jesus**, the** Way.

In a society where all but the homeless can live better than most others in a huge swath of the globe our lives easily can become one big distraction. Usually such distractions have pleasure, as represented in money or power, as a common denominator.

Thus, it is easy to have one's life become consumed with activities and worries centered around maintaining or obtaining pleasure or its first cousin, comfort. The next thing one knows: one has no time left in the day to do what one professes that he really would "like" to do. At that point reaching our destination seems to slip ever further away, like a family car trip where just everything "goes wrong".

Regular church attendance, regular private prayer **and** quiet in this noisy world can be helpful and refreshing in keeping our perspective, our proper mindset, our destination in sight. Our opening collect is powerful in reminding us of our frailness and of how easy it is to get distracted. Praying this particular prayer daily for a week would aid in reminding us to let the Lord guide us, and not to think that we must take care of ourselves.

As we crawl, stumble and creep towards greater trust in allowing the Lord to guide and aid us, we will begin to restore earthly distractions to their proper role: temporary refreshment on our way to eternal refreshment. We will pass through life on the way to our actual physical death by dying slowly to this world and its charms.

Such conversion and death will take a lifetime**, but** it will change us along the way as it did Peter and Paul**. We will change and** we also not get distracted from reaching our destination. Passing through daily changing in the Lord we will be in good company. We will be with all those who experienced the same before us in their own way of the Cross, not least of whom were Peter and Paul. Amen. +