SS Peter and Paul 2014

*Confirm the Brethren*

Luke 22: 29And the Lord said: Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat.  30But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and thou, being once converted, confirm thy brethren.

1. First, *to confirm in faith*.  The Gospel speaks of the confession of Peter: “You are Christ, the Son of the living God” (*Mt*16:16), a confession which does not come from him but from our Father in heaven.  Because of this confession, Jesus replies: “You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church” (v. 18).  The role, the ecclesial service of Peter, is founded upon his confession of faith in Jesus, the Son of the living God, made possible by a grace granted from on high.  In the second part of today’s Gospel we see the peril of thinking in worldly terms.  When Jesus speaks of his death and resurrection, of the path of God which does not correspond to the human path of power, flesh and blood re-emerge in Peter: “He took Jesus aside and began to rebuke him ... This must never happen to you” (16:22).  Jesus’ response is harsh: “Get behind me, Satan!  You are a hindrance to me” (v. 23).  Whenever we let our thoughts, our feelings or the logic of human power prevail, and we do not let ourselves be taught and guided by faith, by God, we become stumbling blocks.  Faith in Christ is the light of our life as Christians and as ministers in the Church!

2. *To confirm in love*.  In the second reading we heard the moving words of Saint Paul: “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith” (*2 Tm*4:7).  But what is this fight?  It is not one of those fights fought with human weapons which sadly continue to cause bloodshed throughout the world; rather, it is the fight of martyrdom.  Saint Paul has but one weapon: the message of Christ and the gift of his entire life for Christ and for others.  It is precisely this readiness to lay himself open, personally, to be consumed for the sake of the Gospel, to make himself all things to all people, unstintingly, that gives him credibility and builds up the Church. And not only the Bishop of Rome: each of you […] has the same task: to let yourselves be consumed by the Gospel, to become all things to everyone. It is your task to hold nothing back, to go outside of yourselves in the service of the faithful and holy people of God.

3. *To confirm in unity*.  The Petrine Ministry is the “the lasting and visible source and foundation of the unity both of faith and of communion” ([*Lumen Gentium*](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html), 18).

This is the Catholic spirit, the Christian spirit: to be united in our differences. This is the way of Jesus!

To confess the Lord by letting oneself be taught by God; to be consumed by love for Christ and his Gospel; to be servants of unity. These, dear brother bishops, are the tasks which the holy apostles Peter and Paul entrust to each of us, so that they can be lived by every Christian. May the holy Mother of God guide us and acompany us always with her intercession.  *Queen of Apostles, pray for us!*  Amen.