

May 22, 2026, Friday of the 7th week of Easter

Acts 25, 13-21; John 21, 15-19

Homily

During the last Passover that Jesus celebrated with his disciples, Peter, with his usual ardour, declared himself ready to follow him to the end, even to death. Jesus replied: "*Peter, the cock will not crow today before you deny three times that you know me*". And, in fact, a few hours later Peter denied Jesus three times and, meeting Jesus' gaze, he went out and wept bitterly.

In one of his last appearances after his resurrection - the one recounted in the Gospel passage we have just read - Jesus did not reproach Peter, but, in a sublime gesture, called on him to affirm three times: "*You know very well that I love you*", thus erasing, as it were, his threefold denial. This deep love for Jesus is Peter's true nature, whereas his denial had been no more than a passing lapse. It is to this true Peter that Jesus entrusts his Church.

And when the risen Jesus, after passing through death, says to Peter: "*Follow me*", both Peter and Jesus know that this is an invitation to go through the same paschal mystery. It was in Rome that Peter gave his final testimony.

The first reading of today's Mass shows us how Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, is also approaching his final witness. Caught, like Jesus, between the Jewish authorities who wanted him dead but did not have the authority to impose death on him, and the Roman authorities who recognised his innocence but did not want to displease the Jews, Paul, using his rights as a Roman citizen, appealed to the emperor. He was therefore taken to Rome to appear before the emperor in Rome. It was there that he died, like Peter, a few years later.

In Saint Peter's Square in Rome, you can still see the two very large statues of these two pillars of the Church, whose liturgical feast we will be celebrating together in a month's time. Among our ancestors in the faith, they are the two giants.

Armand Veilleux