

THE CHAIR OF ST PETER: FRIDAY, 22ND FEBRUARY, 2021, WEEK I, LENT.

1 PETER 5:1-4; PSALM 23; MATTHEW 16:13-19.

Today, the Holy Mother Church celebrates the feast of the Chair of St. Peter.

This feast celebrates the unity of the Church founded upon the Apostles with Peter as the head of that college. Hence, it celebrates the primacy of the office of the Pope as the vicar of Christ.

No wonder, the Gospel recalls how Christ named the Galilean fisherman, the shepherd of His flock and gave him the authority of a teacher and guide of His Church.

The feast of today serves to remind us of the need to always pray for the Holy Father, the Pope.

It is a challenging office, a lot of burden rests on his shoulders especially at this time, a lot of pressures, criticisms, temptations, he is a special target of the devil and his agents, he is at once a Pastor, a Father and a Judge over the universal Church and yet he is human.

One of the most terrible sins of many Catholics is hatred of the Pope. People don't even count this as a mortal sin anymore. They have pure hatred for the Pope, spread false news about Him and condemn outrightly someone that God has not condemned. We may not really agree with all that the Pope does or say, but it is sinful to hate anyone, so much so, the vicar of Christ just because we do not agree with him.

Let us love the Pope and pray daily for him, let us pray that the devil may not succeed in bringing him down.

Secondly, on a day like this, we reflect on our identity as Catholics.

In the Gospel, Jesus asked his disciples "who do people say "the Son of Man is?" The disciples gave the wonderful but untrue opinion of men, only Peter, signifying the Church spoke what is true, accurate and divine under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

It means that the truth about God, human life, faith and morality can be found in the teachings of the Church and not the unstable opinion of people. St Paul describes the Church as the pillar of truth (1 Timothy 3:15).

As such we may ask ourselves these questions;

- A. Do I make a good effort to understand the teachings of the Church?
- B. Do I accept/ believe in the teachings of the Church or do I invent my own faith/truth?
- C. Do I practise what I believe or I believe in what the Church teaches but practise what is convenient for me?