

Homily based on the readings from May 3, 2025 (1 Corinthians 15.1-8; John 14.6-14)

To the best of our knowledge, six of the original twelve Apostles are buried in the City of Rome: Peter, Simon, and Jude are all buried in Saint Peter's Basilica; Bartholomew is buried in Saint Bartholomew's Basilica on Tiber Island; and Philip and James – the saints we are commemorating today – are buried in the crypt beneath the Church of the Twelve Apostles, a lovely (but often overlooked) basilica in the heart of the city. The last time I was in Rome, back in 2017, I had the good fortune to stay just around the corner from the Church of the Twelve Apostles. Even though *every* church in Rome is an *incomparable* treasure, this one, *in particular*, is a place of *profound* beauty and serenity.

This situation raises an obvious question: why, as Catholics, do we pay so much attention to where our saints are laid to rest? There are many reasonable explanations, but perhaps the most *obvious* is that their tombs

provide us with *visible* reminders of the *reality* of their life and ministry. These *physical* locations stand as a *testimony* that the Christian faith is not based on a constructed *mythology* or a set of abstract *principles* – but *actual* events that happened to *real* people. That is the same reason, I think, that the Nicene Creed explicitly mentions that Christ “was crucified under Pontius Pilate.” Pilate himself is barely worth remembering – the *point* is that the Crucifixion, and also the Resurrection, took place at a specific time, in a specific location.

The tombs of the saints also serve a more *personal* function. By visiting these places – as pilgrims or even as tourists – we reenforce the connection between ourselves and the Christians who came before us.

When we speak about the *tradition* of the Church, we are not referring to superficial details – like Easter eggs or Christmas trees – but the life-giving witness that is handed down from generation to generation. That is exactly what Saint Paul is talking about in our first reading:

For I handed on to you as of first importance what I also received:  
that Christ died for our sins  
in accordance with the Scriptures;  
that he was buried;  
that he was raised on the third day  
in accordance with the Scriptures

This *living* tradition was *vibrantly* on display this past Tuesday, up in Norwich – at the Cathedral of Saint Patrick. As you all know, Richard Reidy, our new bishop, was ordained by Christopher Coyne, the Archbishop of Hartford. Archbishop Coyne himself was ordained in 2011 by Archbishop Buechlein, who was ordained by Archbishop Kelly, who was ordained by Cardinal Bernadin – and so on, back to the Apostles themselves. The point is that Christianity is not *only* grounded in objective, historical *facts* – that *history*, in fact, is still unfolding *here and now*, in Connecticut and around the world. Every single one of us participates in the living tradition of the Church – every time we visit the tomb of a saint, every time we read Holy Scripture, and every time we

partake of the sacraments. It is with this *certainty*, and this *hope*, that we move forward – step by step – on the long and weary path that leads to our heavenly homeland.