



Vox Populi
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On 29 June we celebrate the Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul. Together, the two saints are considered the founders of the See of Rome through their preaching, ministry and martyrdom there.

St Peter was one of Jesus' original twelve Apostles, and the first Pope. A Jewish fisherman before Jesus called him to be an Apostle, Jesus changed his name from Simon to Peter, meaning "rock", and gave him the keys to the kingdom of Heaven "And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it." (Mt 16:18). Peter became one of the first leaders of the early Christian Church and features in all four Gospels as well as the Acts of the Apostles.

St Peter was crucified upside down in Nero's circus on Vatican Hill, around A.D. 67, because he felt unworthy to die the same way as his Lord. He was buried in a nearby cemetery.

The cemetery can be seen today under St Peter's Basilica, and the remains of a 2nd century shrine built over the burial spot. In order to preserve the historical and archaeological site there are limited visits to the necropolis underneath the Basilica, where the Tomb of St Peter is located.

St Paul was the Apostle of the Gentiles. Not one of the 12 Apostles, Paul was called personally by Jesus Christ. A Jewish pharisee and anti-Christian, he was converted when the Resurrected Lord appeared to him on the road to Damascus. He went on to evangelise throughout the Mediterranean from the Holy Land to Rome and Spain. He is recognised for his many conversions and establishing churches through his travels and preaching.

St Paul was imprisoned in Rome before his beheading was ordered by Nero near the time of St Peter's martyrdom. While Peter is the "rock" on which the Church was built as well as leader of the people of God, Paul was the most fervent preacher of the Word and the first missionary.

"Christian tradition has always considered Saint Peter and Saint Paul to be inseparable: indeed, together, they represent the whole Gospel of Christ." (Pope Benedict XVI).

We can learn how to love and serve God from these leaders of the Church.

Next Wednesday, 3 July, the Church celebrates the feast day of St Thomas the Apostle. Best known for his unwillingness to believe other Apostles in their claim Jesus had risen from the dead, St Thomas

teaches us about believing without seeing. After Pentecost, St Thomas went on to preach the Good News, eventually reaching India, where he died in 72 A.D. St Thomas shows us that Jesus meets us where we are, even if that is when we question and struggle, have doubts or fears. He is ready to guide us like He did Thomas.