

The Feast of Saints Peter and Paul

WE OWE TO THE HOLY APOSTLES the priceless treasure of the Christian faith. They handed Christ's teaching down to us. From them, we received the Holy Gospel and the letters of the Apostles. They laid a firm foundation for the Church of Christ. St. Paul, the Apostle, claims first place, for in his letters he has given to the Church a rich revelation of God, and a wealth of divine teachings. The Liturgical Year gives the Apostle St. Peter first place, assigning him two days in the year, namely, January 16 — the feast of St. Peter in Chains, and June 29 — the latter date on which our Eastern Church celebrates with solemnity the feast of the Holy, Glorious, All-Praiseworthy and Chief Apostles Peter and Paul. Both Apostles are distinguished for their character, their zealous apostolic labours and their great devotion to the holy Church.

Jesus Christ, having great plans for St. Peter at the beginning of his calling, change the name Simon to the symbolic name of Peter-Cephas, which means 'rock', for he was to be the rock that would form the foundation of His Church. St. Peter was closely associated with Christ during His public life: He witnessed the glory of Christ on Mount Tabor; in the name of all the Apostles, he professed the divinity of Christ; he was sent with St. John to prepare the Paschal Supper; He witnessed Christ's agony in the Garden of Olives; the temple tax was paid by Christ for Himself and for Peter.



The love of Christ was the chief motive of Peter's apostolic activity, labours and sacrifices. That love finally led him to suffer and die for the sake of his beloved Teacher. A pious tradition relates that he considered himself unworthy to die on the cross as Christ did, and therefore asked to be crucified upside down. St. Peter died in Rome during the reign of Emperor Nero (54-68), between the years 64-67 A.D.; St. John Chrysostom following tradition gives June 29 as the day of his death.

St. Paul did not belong to the original group of the twelve apostles, but through his apostolic labours, his dedication, his superhuman sacrifices, and his sufferings in the service of Christ, he received the title, along with Peter, of the First Apostle. He is the only one of the Apostles who was highly educated and was by birth a Roman citizen. While Paul was on his way to Damascus, Christ Himself converted him in a miraculous manner and called him to be an Apostle. After his conversion from being a persecutor of Christians, he became, in heart and soul, a zealous and courageous apostle of Christ. For many years, he fearlessly preached the Gospel of Jesus Christ day and night. His unlimited love for Christ knew no obstacles, recognized no difficulties, and placed no limit to sacrifice. His love impelled him to undertake great missionary journeys and to establish new Churches; he was always ready to suffer and die for Christ. Known as the "apostle of the Gentiles", he was not only an excellent preacher and a good organizer, but also an eminent theologian and writer. From him we have fourteen letters addressed to various Churches or persons in which he clearly illustrates the teachings of Christ. St. Paul gave up his life for Christ. According to tradition, he died by sword in Rome on June 29, in the year 65 or 67 A.D.

Celebrating Our Deep Faith

Byzantine Catholic Worship: Our Church, Its Customs and Rich Heritage

First Sunday after Pentecost: Sunday of All Saints

*"We extol you, Apostles, Martyrs, Prophets and all Saints,
and we honour your holy memory, as you pray for us to Christ our God."*

(Hymn of Praise of the Sunday of All Saints)

THE EIGHTH SUNDAY after the Resurrection of our Lord, that is, the first Sunday after Pentecost, is called the **Sunday of All Saints**. On this day, the Eastern Church pays particular veneration to all those who are the fruit of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Our holy fathers instituted this feast and directed it to be kept after the feast of the Descent of the Holy Spirit as if to set before us an example of how the coming of the all-Holy Spirit enabled them to attain sanctity. He made holy and all wise those who were of the same nature as we in order to give them the place forfeited by the fallen angels. Through Christ, he brought them to God — some through suffering and martyrdom; others through perseverance in the life of heroic virtue.



By honouring the saints, we honour God for respect shown to them is respect shown to God. The saints did not become saints by their own power — their holiness is the result of God's grace. All that they are, they owe to God. Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky (†1944) said: "The veneration of saints not only does not oppose in any way the worship that is due to God but eminently contributes to it. We honour the saints as servants of

God, as our heavenly protectors who intercede for us before God and obtain from Him, for us, the forgiveness of our sins and heavenly grace."

The saints, then, are the closest friends to God, hence, the honour we pay to them is pleasing to God. The Second Vatican Council encourages us to venerate the saints: "It is supremely fitting, therefore...that we render due thanks to God for them and suppliantly invoke them and have recourse to their prayers, their power and their help."

All the saints are very close to us for they, like us, were once citizens of our earth and are of our own flesh and bone. They are members of the same Church as we are, although they belong to the Church Triumphant while we still struggle as members of the Church on earth or the Church Militant. They are not indifferent to our welfare and salvation. Hence, there exists no doubt that they readily listen to all our petitions and prayers and gladly present them before the throne of God.

*Rejoice in the Lord, O you just, praise befits the righteous.
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!*

Evangelism: Becoming Fishers of Men

The Gospel for the Second Sunday after Pentecost

CHRI^ST COMMANDED HIS DISCIPLES to become fishers of men – to do the work of evangelism. In Jesus' time, fishermen worked in groups – several men in a boat, often co-operating with partners in other boats. Evangelism is a co-operative enterprise. It isn't meant for people who like to go at it alone (Jesus sent out the apostles in teams of two) or for people who like to make a name for themselves alone. The nature of Christian evangelism is to bring others into the community of "fishers of men." We are constantly growing the community of people willing to co-operate in living together according to the Gospel teachings. We are trying to bring others into the Body of Christ so that we can live and work together in serving Christ, one another and the Gospel. The "fishers of men" analogy of Christ is speaking to us about a corporate, even commercial, venture, where we must work together in order to survive in the world.



To change from fishermen to fishers of men is to change our value system completely. Fishermen are in the work to make a profit in this world, fishers of men are working for the Kingdom of God, without regard to the profitability of their work.

We all who have come into the net of the apostles – all who attend church, are to become fishers of men as well. We are to join the apostles in their work, not just expect them to do the work for us. The fishers of men imagery opposes a sense that we who enter into the church are to be passive recipients of what the apostles, or the experts, or the professionals or the clergy or the hierarchy do. The fishers of men are looking for fellow humans to join them, not fish to train or devour! We who come into the net spread by the apostolic work, are not fish but humans and we are to behave as such in the church.

Fishing as a commercial enterprise also means discernment – not everything that gets into the fishermen's nets is equally valuable or good. We are looking for humans, not fish, and so we have to be perceptive about those who are ready to hear the Gospel and those who are ready to come into the Church to themselves share in the fishers of men ministry. Christ's very invitation to the first disciples was to follow Him in order to be made into fishers of men. The invitation to become "fishers of men" was the appeal of becoming a disciple of Christ from the beginning. Our following Christ is not just self-serving (so I can get to the kingdom), but rather so that I can serve Christ by becoming part of the community who are fishers of men.

As fishers of men, we don't need to travel to distant lands, for there are plenty of people all around us for us to do our work. We all are to share in this ministry – to support one another in doing this work, to cooperate with each other. The main tool of our fishing labour is love – love for God and for one another. This is why it is possible for every Christian to do this work.

Father's Day: A Special Honour Throughout History

FATHER'S DAY is a day set apart to celebrate fatherhood, recognize the influence of fathers in our homes and society, and foster paternal bonds. It is also celebrated to honour and commemorate our fathers and forefathers. While it is celebrated in Canada and the U.S. on the third Sunday of June, in many other countries the officially recognized date of Father's Day varies. The idea of a special day to honour fathers and celebrate fatherhood was introduced from the United States. A woman called Sonora Smart Dodd was inspired by the American Mother's Day celebrations and planned a day to honour our fathers early in the 20th century. The first Father's Day was celebrated in Spokane, Washington on June 19, 1910. Father's Day has become increasingly popular throughout North America and other parts of the world over the years.

While God's Word is silent about any day being set aside specifically to honour fathers, the Bible does recognize a special place of honour for men who were leaders or examples of excellence in certain skills, such as Jabal, who was "the father of those who live in tents and raise livestock" and his brother Jubal, who was "the father of all who play the harp and flute" (Gen. 4:20-21). Also, when Abram's name was changed to Abraham, God told him, "I have made you a father of many nations" (Gen. 17:5), clearly indicating fatherhood as a place of honour in His eyes. Thus, even though the Bible does not make mention of a "Father's Day," we can clearly see that God does recognize the importance of fathers and even gave them special honour throughout history.

Furthermore, we can follow this theme of fatherhood in the very person of God Himself through countless scriptures (Matthew 5:45; 6:9,32; Romans 1:7; 15:6; 1 Corinthians 8:6). There are many instances that speak of Jesus Christ, the Son, honouring His Father and the will of His Father (John 17:1 and John 17:5). The apostle Paul taught that to honour one's earthly father is not only a commandment but the first commandment that, when obeyed, has a promise of things going well and living long on the earth. "Honour your father and mother — which is the first commandment with a promise — that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth" (Ephesians. 6:2-3). In light of these verses, and many others, it would seem to be perfectly God-honouring to celebrate a day in which fathers, the God-given spiritual head of the family, could and should be honoured.

