

# Apostles Peter and Paul

June 29

One of the oldest saints' days in Rome, June 29 was dedicated to the memory of the apostles Peter and Paul as early as the fourth century. This day the church remembers two disciples who differed greatly in style and background, but who shared a tireless energy in spreading the gospel.

Rough-hewn and impulsive Peter left his fishing nets immediately to answer Jesus' call. Later, during the passion of Jesus, Peter made his denials just as impulsively, though he had pledged his loyalty to Jesus only that evening. Receiving Christ's gracious forgiveness after the resurrection, Peter went on to become the rock-steady and faithful leader of the disciples. Imprisoned three or four times, he eventually was crucified during the reign of Nero. Legend has it that he was hung on the cross head down because he told the soldiers that he was not worthy to die in the same manner as Christ.

Once Paul, who had been a rigid and violent persecutor of Christians, experienced the love of Christ, he grew meek—though never shy. He founded many churches and was able to affirm the fledgling communities of believers even while he was admonishing them. Paul's writings are the first Christian scriptures; they are older than the gospels. After many imprisonments, Paul was executed during the reign of Nero. Since he was a Roman citizen, he was beheaded instead of crucified.

Coastal countries like Chile and Paraguay remember Peter the fisherman with nautical parades. In Hungary and in rural England, people braid straw from the wheat harvest into crosses and crowns to honor the two martyr saints.

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