



June 29, 2025

Sts. Peter and Paul, Apostles

"You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God." Matthew 16:16

Dear Friends

There is a legend that says the city of Rome was founded by twin brothers Romulus and Remus. A local king had ordered them killed. They were saved by a she-wolf, who nursed them until a local shepherd found them. Peter and Paul came to be seen as new re-founders of Rome. Both ministered to the church in Rome, and both died there about the same time. Today is a great celebration in the city of Rome.

Here the icon for this feast shows the two apostles holding up a building that represents the Church. Above them, in the mandorla, is the risen Christ who watches over the Church. I think that they both would be surprised to be together on the same feast and on the same icon.

Peter and Paul came from very different backgrounds and had different gifts. But they had one thing in common: both were called to a mission by Jesus' love. Peter is the nickname Jesus gave Simon. "Peter" means rock. The rock of Peter's faith would be the place where Jesus would build his church.

Peter was a simple fisherman yet was a complex character. Peter often showed a deep understanding and love for Christ Jesus. But other times he could be dense. When Jesus announced his coming passion and death Peter argued with him. Jesus then accuses Peter of trying to *"trip me up."* When Jesus is eventually arrested, Peter denied knowing Jesus three times and then hid out of fear. When the Risen Jesus appears he three times asks Peter, *"Do you love me... Feed my lambs."*

Peter was recognized as a leader among the apostles. After the resurrection Peter calls the others together to find a replacement for Judas. On Pentecost morning he preached a bold sermon to the crowds. He performed the first healing in the name of Jesus. After the controversy of Gentiles accepting Christ without being Jews he has a dream. In it he came to understand that the gospel message is meant for everyone on earth not just Jewish people like himself.

Early in life Paul persecuted Jewish Christians with determination. But he has a vision of the risen Christ on the road to Damascus that completely changed him. When Paul began to proclaim Christ, other Christians were naturally suspicious of him. But over the next thirty years he would convince them of his sincerity. Paul had brilliant mind and a good education. Because he studied to be a rabbi, he was very familiar with the scriptures.

Paul had great success in converting the God-fearing Gentiles who had followed the ethics of Judaism. These Gentiles did not fully convert because it involved circumcision and all the regulations of the law. Paul insightfully sees that faith in Jesus replaces the need for circumcision; and the practice of love and charity replaces the observance of the law. For Paul faith, not law, saves us. Paul's position was new and controversial. At one point it puts him at odds with Peter. But eventually the Holy Spirit will help the church overcome these tensions.

Wherever Paul went he left behind Christian communities. His letters to these communities are the oldest parts of the New Testament. Both these apostles end up ministering in the Roman capital. Each had their gifts. Peter, a leader who keeps the community together. Paul inspired to creatively rework the tradition to further the mission of Jesus. Both their talents are needed for the Church to continue its mission. Both died under the persecution by Emperor Nero around 67 AD. Let us pray for Christians who like Peter and Paul face persecution.

Peace,

Fr Ron

Esta carta está en español en el sitio web: www.anne.church

