

Saint Thomas and Saint Thomas of the Air Church  
 St Peter  
 June 29, 2025  
 rmceely+

Thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build my church

The Church celebrates the lives, works and examples of the Saints.  
 Unlike our Roman cousins though, we do it in moderation,  
 Focusing on the Apostles, John the Baptist, Paul, Stephen  
 And Mary.  
 A small group of people  
 Who have given all and so shaped the Church  
 And our lives.

The Church declares these days of remembrance and  
 commemoration as “feast days”.  
 We get our word “feast” from the Latin “festus”  
 Meaning joyful celebration or merry making.  
 So a feast in the Church is a time of joy and celebration.  
 An occasion to deepen our knowledge  
 And extract precious information for our own sanctification.  
 Some say; its good to hang out with Holy People.  
 By reminding ourselves of the order,  
 Meaning and purpose of their lives  
 Feasting is a way to experience and participate  
 In the joy that God provides.

We remember the Saints, not on their day of birth  
 Not on the occasion of the climax of their lives,  
 But on the occasion of their martyrdom.

So we celebrate them vested in red,  
 The color of blood,  
 to remind ourselves that they gave their lives  
 and some under horrible, tortuous means.

June 29<sup>th</sup> is the day set aside for the memory of St Peter.  
 And when it falls on a Sunday  
 It takes precedence over the calendar Sunday.  
 It is a feast day in the Church.  
 A day not marked by elaborate and abundant food  
 But elaborate and abundant grace.

We know him as Peter,  
 But that was the name given him by Jesus.  
 When we first met him, he is Simon;  
 Simon bar-Jona  
 Simon the son of Jona.  
 You will also hear him called “Cephas or Kephas;”  
 The Aramaic word equivalent to the Greek “Petros”.  
 And the English translation: “Peter”  
 Cephas, Kephas, Petros and Peter all meaning; rock.

We first meet him on the shores of the Sea of Galilee.  
 A fisherman from a fisherman’s family.  
 He had been born there, in Bethsaida  
 A village on the northern shore where the River Jordan  
 Meets the Sea of Galilee.  
 We also meet his brother, Andrew  
 And James and his brother John, the Zebedee boys  
 Their partners in the fishing enterprise.

The three of them, Peter, James and John would be the closest  
 To Jesus;  
 Would be the men whom Jesus selected for specific  
 Important events in His 3 year ministry on Earth.  
 They served as a kind of executive committee  
 or inner circle of the Apostles.  
 Trusted by Jesus to be witnesses.

Peter was three years with Jesus and spent the remainder of his life  
Telling the story.

He devoted some 34 years to his ministry.

Traveling, spreading the word to a primarily Jewish audience

Through Asia Minor, modern day Turkey

From Laodicea to the shores of the Black Sea

From the straights of the Bosphorus to Nicea

From Derbe to Lystra in the heart of the Country.

And then to Rome.

Where he established a church.

Evangelizing wherever he went.

Telling the story.

He was about 64 to 68 years old when he was martyred in Rome.

Nero was Emperor of the empire.

Some historians believe Nero suffered

from severe mental illness,

sadism some say.

There was a great fire in Rome, that burned for 9 days.

By the time it burned itself out

Two thirds of Rome lay in burnt-out ruin.

Legend says that Nero himself was to blame

But he needed a scapegoat,

And he chose the Christians of Rome.

Peter was captured

Held for a time

And then executed in Rome

Where now stands Vatican Hill and St Peter's Basilica.

By tradition,

It is said that when the Roman authorities proceeded to crucify

Him on the cross,

Peter declared he was unworthy

to be killed in the same manner as Jesus

and was placed head down.

By the time of his death in Rome,  
 Peter had dedicated more than half his life to Christ.

We know a good deal about Peter from scripture:

Peter's name is mentioned in the Gospels  
 more often than any other except Jesus.  
 In the Bible no one speaks more often  
 And no one is spoken to more often, than Peter.  
 No disciple is rebuked by the Lord more than Peter.  
 No disciple rebukes the Lord as Peter.  
 No one else confessed Christ more boldly  
 Nor acknowledges His Lordship more explicitly.  
 Yet, no other disciple ever verbally denied Christ  
 as forcefully or as publicly as Peter did.  
 No one is praised and blessed by Christ the way Peter was  
 Yet, Peter was the only one Christ ever addressed as

Satan.

The Lord had harsher things to say to Peter than He ever said  
 To any of the others.

We know from scripture that Peter was married

When he walked away from that miraculous catch of fish  
 And his livelihood on the Sea of Galilee.  
 Scripture confirms that his wife  
 traveled along with him on at least some occasions  
 as he journeyed with Jesus through Galilee and Judea.

Scripture is appropriately replete with accounts of Peter

This so very human and loveable saint;  
 Of his unbridled tongue.  
 His impetuous nature.  
 His inability to filter his words.

We know of his triple denial of Jesus during the Jewish trials.  
 His valiant attempt to protect Jesus  
     from the overwhelming mob  
     led by Judas to arrest Our Lord  
     in the garden of Gethsemane.  
 The time he saw Jesus walking toward their boat  
     on the storm tossed waters of the Sea of Galilee  
     And leapt into the water to himself walk to Jesus.

The time he saw Jesus on the shore after his Resurrection and  
 again dove into the sea to reach shore to greet him.

The Transfiguration.  
 Jesus' prayer at the garden  
     When the Apostles slept.

When Jesus raised his friend Lazarus from the dead  
 When Jesus raised Jairus' daughter from the dead.

Jesus had Peter present for all these important events in His  
 ministry.  
 Why?  
 Why Peter?

Perhaps the answer lies in today's Gospel.  
 St Matthew's account of the time when Jesus asks of the 12,  
     "Who do men say that I am?"  
 It is toward the end of His Galilean ministry,  
     After the feeding miracles  
     After many healings  
     After raising Jarius' daughter from the dead.

They are gathered together and only Peter answers the direct  
 question"  
     "but who do you say I am?"

Peter replies:

“Thou art the Christ. The Son of the living God”.  
 You can almost feel His smile as Jesus says;  
 “Thou art Peter,  
 and upon this rock  
 I will build my church”.

Is Jesus indicating that his Church will be built upon this man  
 Peter?

Or is there more involved?

The first thing Jesus said after Peter’s insightful and stupendous  
 answer is this:

“for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee,  
 but my Father which is in heaven”.

It seems improbable, as some surmise,  
 that the entire foundation of Christ’s Church  
 was placed upon the shoulders of one man.

Was “this rock” not more likely  
 solid faith,  
 faith in Jesus Himself  
 the Holy Ghost and the Father?

As Jesus said, mankind certainly had not revealed to Peter the  
 Sonship of Jesus by the living God.  
 But His Father, who was in Heaven.

So what is it about the life, work and example of St Peter  
 That brings us to his feast day?  
 the cause for joyous celebration?

It cannot be denied that Peter’s endearing fallibility  
 Draws us to him.

The knowledge that one does not have to be perfect to serve God

Does not have to have a glittering golden education  
Does not need to be of a certain demographic,  
Wealth  
Or status.

Peter was very much an ordinary man  
Doing ordinary work.

He made mistakes  
Just like us.  
Yet, he accomplished great things.

He was courageous  
Passionate for the Lord and His people  
Dedicated to God.

His life, work and example is an incentive  
An inspiration for us all.

