

## The Feast of Sts. Peter & Paul, Apostles

The Book of the Acts of the Apostles places St. Paul in Rome for his imprisonment following his Missionary Journeys (Acts 28:16). Although the Book of Acts does not specifically mention St. Peter being in Rome, Romans 15:20-22 is frequently cited as referring to Peter's work in Rome. The reference to Babylon in 1 Peter 5:13 may also be based on his presence in Rome.

Early attestation by the Church Fathers to these two greatest of Apostles shepherding the church in Rome together is found in the writings of Clement, Bishop of Rome (d. 99 A. ✕ D.), Ignatius (d. c. 100 A. ✕ D.), and Irenaeus (d. c. 200 A. ✕ D.). Tradition records that both St. Peter and Paul were martyred in Rome under the bloody persecution of the Roman Emperor Nero, about 65 A. ✕ D. St. Peter is said to have been crucified upside-down (by his request, that he not diminish the death of Christ by dying similarly). St. Paul is said to have been beheaded. At the *Tre Fontane* abbey in Rome, the tradition is that after the swordsman did his gruesome work, St. Paul's head bounced three times. At each point a fountain sprang up, hence "the Abbey of the Three Fountains", said to be built on the exact location of the martyrdom of Paul. While Sts. Peter and Paul were unlikely martyred at the same time, the combination of their Commemorations on June 29<sup>th</sup> each year has led to the understanding that they died together.

Cover Art – *Sts. Peter & Paul*, 1482 A. ✕ D. by Bartolomeo Vivarini.  
Tempera on panel, gold gilt frame.  
Basilica di Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, Venice, Italy

In this classical rendering of Sts. Peter & Paul by Vivarini, St. Paul is seen with the Sword of the Spirit (*Spiritus Gladius*, Ephesians 6:17), which is the Word of God. St. Peter is depicted with the Keys to the Kingdom of Heaven (St. Matthew 16:19). Both symbols can be found on Zion's ceiling.

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# Sts. Peter & Paul Apostles, Martyrs