

Reflection for the Solemnity of St. Peter and Paul

Today June 29th, 2025, we celebrate the Solemnity of St. Peter and St. Paul. This Feast has been Celebrated in Church since at least the year 258. These two saints have traditionally been seen as the founders of the Church in Rome, through their preaching, ministry and martyrdom in the city. It might seem a little odd to be celebrating the Feast of St. Peter and St. Paul on a Sunday, normally the Feasts of Saints are not celebrated on a Sunday. To better understand why we are celebrating the Solemnity of St. Peter and St. Paul on a Sunday it might be helpful to investigate the terms Solemnity, Feast, and Memorial.

Recently I read an article that was written by Fr. Edward McNamara, a Professor of Liturgy at the Pontifical Athenaeum Regina Apostolorum University in Rome. The title of the article is *Solemnities, Feasts, Memorials*. The author starts his article pointing out that word *feast*, can be used for all levels of celebrations, even though the word also has a precise technical meaning in the hierarchy of liturgical celebrations in the Catholic Church. This statement by the author is informing us that Solemnities, Feasts and Memorials are not all created equal there is an importance place for the Liturgical celebrations that are given these titles. While the word *feast* can be used to describe all these celebrations in the liturgical life of the Church, the author goes on to point out that there are three basic classes for these celebrations, as the title of his article points out, but in truth there are seven groupings for these celebrations. Solemnity is the highest classification and is reserved for the most important mysteries of faith. This includes Easter, Pentecost and the Immaculate Conception, principal titles of Our Lord, and celebrations that honor saints that have particular importance in the salvation history of humanity such as St. Peter and St. Paul, also the birthday of St. John the Baptist. It is important to note that a Solemnity is celebrated if it falls on a Sunday of Ordinary Time or in the Christmas Season, but it is transferred to the following Monday if it falls on a Sunday of Advent, Lent, and Easter. The next classification is the Feast, which is a liturgical celebration that honors a mystery or title of Our Lord, Our Lady, or a Saint of particular importance such as the Apostles, Evangelists, historical figures in the Church such as the Deacon, St. Lawrence. Feasts of the Lord, such as the Transfiguration of the Lord, are celebrated when the date of the Feast lands on a Sunday, which is not the case with the other Feasts. This brings us to Memorials which are usually for Saints but can also celebrate some aspect of the Lord or of our Blessed Mother. The Memorial of the Holy Name of Jesus and the Obligatory Memorial of the Immaculate Heart of Mary are two examples. The difference with an Obligatory Memorial and an Optional Memorial is that the Obligatory Memorial must be celebrated at a regularly scheduled Mass were as the Optional Memorial is not required to be celebrated at a regularly scheduled Mass. This leads us to the celebration of All Soul's Day, which is a special class, it is not considered to be a Solemnity but still has precedence over a Sunday.

Now that we have a better understanding of what a Solemnity, Feast, and Memorial is, this might be a good moment for us to reflect on the Solemnity of St. Peter and St. Paul. As a Church we have been celebrating this Solemnity for 1,767 years. 67 years before the Council of Nicene, the Solemnity of St. Peter and St. Paul was already being celebrated in the Catholic Church. But we can turn to the Nicene Creed that was a product of the Council of Nicene and find the reason for the importance of the Feast we celebrate this weekend. In the first sentence of the last paragraph of the Creed we find, *I believe in one, holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church*. St. Peter and St. Paul are Apostles for Christ, as with the other Apostles went forth and shared our Faith the Catholic Faith with the whole world. These brave souls filled with the Holy Spirit went forth risking and giving their lives for the Faith that you and I are a part of. The Faith we have is the Faith that Jesus Christ gave to the Apostles and informed them to go forth and share the Good News, Baptizing in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. It is amazing to think that our Church of 1.4 billion Catholics started in a small and forgotten part of the world, by the Son of God, who entrusted the Church to His 12 closest followers. This Solemnity reminds us of the history of our Church, and that all things are possible with God. May we just trust in our Triune God as St. Peter and St. Paul did, as they shared the Good News with the world risking and giving their lives for the faith we are blessed to have.