

# WITNESSES TO FREEDOM

## STS. PETER AND PAUL

*"We are witnesses of these things."*

Peter and Paul are often seen in the Church as a complementary pair. Peter represents the institutional church, while Paul represents the charismatic or spiritual church. Both are associated with the church in Rome. But what binds them together, above all, is that they were utterly seized by Jesus' message.



The New Testament often portrays Peter as rash and headstrong. One minute, he is a paragon of faith; the next, he has completely misunderstood what Jesus wants. He frequently does not seem to get what is going on, and he even denies Jesus when Jesus is about to be executed. And yet, despite his shortcomings and weaknesses, he has a heart for the Lord. He is the Prince of the Apostles, and as the first bishop of Rome, he holds a special place in the hearts of Catholic Christians.

Scripture introduces Paul as a violent persecutor of the first Christians. In fact, he oversees the execution of the man whom the Acts of the Apostles depicts as the first martyr, St. Stephen (Acts 7:58-8:1). He considers himself a late addition to the Jesus movement, referring to himself as "one untimely born" (1 Cor 15:8). However, following his encounter with Christ near Damascus, he became one of the greatest missionaries in the history of the Church. Like Peter, Paul has a heart for the Lord, and when his spiritual energy is directed to the glory of Jesus Christ, he is a powerful witness to the kingdom of God. His letters make up the bulk of the New Testament and continue to guide the Church today.

It is a beautiful testimony to the power of God that these two men, whose faults Scripture does not attempt to hide, are key figures in the story of Jesus and foundational in the development of the Church. Sts. Peter and Paul show us the work of the Holy Spirit, who renews hearts, builds the Church, and testifies to Christ. Peter died in Rome as martyr – on a cross, according to some accounts. Paul suffered for the cause of the gospel throughout his ministry, writing several letters from prison. He, like Peter, was martyred in Rome.

Imperfect men, seized by the Word of God and set on fire by the Holy Spirit. They are pillars of our Church and witnesses to freedom in Christ.

**Sts. Peter and Paul, pray for us!**



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