

## **22 February: Chair of Saint Peter**

Throughout two thousand years of history, the Church has preserved the apostolic succession. And among the Apostles, Christ himself made Simon the object of a special choice: "You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church." Peter moved to Rome and established there the seat of the primacy, of the Vicar of Christ.

02/17/2026

Jesus said to him: "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Mt 16:18-19).

- "Unity and Love for the Good Shepherd": Saint Josemaría and the saints on love for the Pope and trust in God
- Gospel and commentary for 22 February, the Chair of Saint Peter
- Love for the Pope: advice from Saint Josemaría
- Learn more about the history of the Chair of Saint Peter on the

## **What is the Chair of Saint Peter?**

The Chair of Saint Peter or the feast of the Chair of Saint Peter is a commemoration of the apostle's contributions to the Christian Church. It celebrates his authority and his tireless efforts to build a strong community around Christ's teachings, and has been celebrated since the early days of Christianity.

Saint Peter holds the keys of the kingdom of heaven, which were entrusted to him by Jesus Christ Himself.

## **When is the feast of the Chair of Saint Peter celebrated?**

This is a very ancient tradition, with celebrations in Rome documented as early as the third century, by which we give thanks to God for the mission entrusted to the apostle Saint Peter and to his successors. The "chair," literally, is the fixed seat of the bishop, placed in the mother church of a diocese, which is called a "cathedral" for the Latin *cathedra* (chair), and is the symbol of the bishop's authority and of the Gospel teaching which he is called to preserve and transmit to the Christian community as a successor of the Apostles.

In ancient times, the feast of the Chair of Saint Peter was celebrated on 18 January and 22 February. 18 January was when Saint Peter gave his first sermon in Rome, whilst 22

February was when he gave his first sermon in Antioch.

The Chair of Saint Peter has been celebrated on 22 February since 1969, when it became the official date of the feast in the Roman calendar.

## **What does the feast of the Chair of Saint Peter celebrate?**

One of the main reasons for celebrating the feast of the Chair of Saint Peter is to celebrate the unity of the Christian Church.

Another important reason is that the chair symbolises Saint Peter's authority and his dedication to building solid foundations for the Church. Saint Peter is venerated in the Christian community throughout the world and is an important figure in Vatican history. He is considered

the first Pope, and the feast of the Chair of Saint Peter marks Rome's long papacy from the first century.

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## **Love for the Roman Pontiff, a beautiful passion**

We help to make that apostolic continuity more evident in the eyes of all men by demonstrating with exquisite fidelity our union with the Pope, which is union with Peter. Love for the Roman Pontiff must be in us a delightful passion, for in him we see Christ. If we deal with the Lord in prayer, we will go forward with a clear gaze that will permit us to perceive the action of the Holy Spirit, even in the face of events we do not understand or which produce sighs or sorrow (*In Love with the Church*, no. 13).

## Ever more 'Roman'

The Catholic Church is roman. I savour that word, roman! I feel completely roman, since roman means universal, catholic. For it leads me to love tenderly the Pope, *il dolce Cristo in terra*, as Saint Catherine of Siena, whom I count as a most beloved friend, liked to repeat (*In Love with the Church*, no. 11).

Each day you must grow in loyalty to the Church, the Pope, and the Holy See... with a love that should be always *more theological* (*Furrow*, no. 353).

## Rome, apostolic see

Through two thousand years of history, the apostolic succession has been preserved in the Church. (...) And, among the Apostles, Christ himself made Simon the object of special attention. You are Peter and

on this rock I will build my church! I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail; and when you have turned again, strengthen your brethren. Peter moves to Rome and there establishes the see of primacy of the Vicar of Christ. For this reason it is in Rome that the apostolic succession is seen most clearly (*In Love with the Church*, no. 12).

## **All with Peter, to Jesus through Mary!**

Mary continually builds the Church and keeps it together. It is difficult to have devotion to our Lady and not feel closer to the other members of the mystical body and more united to its visible head, the pope. That's why I like to repeat: All with Peter to Jesus through Mary! By seeing ourselves as part of the Church and united to our brothers in the faith, we understand more deeply that we are brothers of all mankind, for the Church has been

sent to all the peoples of the earth  
(*Christ is Passing By*, no. 139).

For me, in the hierarchy of love, the Pope comes right after the Most Holy Trinity and our Mother the Virgin. I cannot forget that it was his Holiness Pius XII who approved Opus Dei at a time when some people considered our spirituality a heresy. Nor can I forget that the first words of kindness and affection I received in Rome in 1946 came from the then Monsignor Montini. The affable and paternal charm of John XXIII, every time I had occasion to visit him, remains engraved in my memory. Once I told him 'In our Work all men, Catholics or not, have always been lovingly received. It is not from your Holiness that I learned ecumenism.' And Pope John laughed with obvious emotion. What more can I tell you? The Roman Pontiffs, all of them, have always had understanding and

affection for Opus Dei  
(Conversations, no. 46).

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(04/02/2026)