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Seasoning the Seasons™

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The Chair of Peter, Apostle

The Chair of Peter, Apostle: February 22

February 22 is a special day on the Catholic Church's Calendar. It is the Feast of the Chair of Peter, Apostle.

Why do you think we would celebrate a Feast Day about a chair? Well, this day isn't about just any chair. It is about a special chair, and the person who sits in that chair.

The Chair of Saint Peter is in the city of Rome, which is in the country of Italy. Do you know who Saint Peter was? He was one of Jesus' apostles, and he was also the very first Pope. The Pope is the leader of all of the Catholics in the world. The Chair of Saint Peter is the Pope's chair.

The ancient Latin word for the chair that important officials sat in is "cathedra." This is the word the Catholic Church uses for the Bishop's chair. The Pope is the Bishop of Rome. But every diocese has a bishop. And the church where the Bishop's chair is located at in each diocese is called the "cathedral" church of that diocese, because of the bishop's chair – the "cathedra."



The Chair of Peter, Apostle, is a symbol of the authority that Jesus gave to Saint Peter to lead the Church. Saint Peter is often pictured holding keys, as another symbol of his leadership and authority. In the Bible (Matthew 16:18-19), Jesus says he is giving the keys of the kingdom of heaven to Peter. Look at the picture of Saint Peter on this page. Do you see the keys?

Saint Peter was a martyr. That means that he was put to death for witnessing to his faith. When Saint Peter, who was the first Pope, died, the Church community chose a new Pope. And when that pope died, they chose yet another new Pope. Since the time of Saint Peter, we have had 265 Popes!

Do you know who our current Pope is? He is Pope Benedict XVI.

On the Feast of the Chair of Peter, Apostle, we not only celebrate Saint Peter, but we celebrate the office of the papacy – the office of leadership of our Catholic Church.



The Feast of the Chair of Saint Peter has been celebrated since the Fourth Century. In ancient Rome, between February 13 and February 22, people used to have a special celebration honoring their relatives who had died. At their celebration, they would leave a chair, or a “cathedra”, empty in honor of their deceased relatives. Since it is not known on exactly what date Saint Peter died, the people began honoring him in a special way on February 22. They were celebrating his leadership of the Church of Rome – our Roman Catholic Church!



While there is only one cathedra, or bishop's chair, in each diocese – at the cathedral church (remember that the cathedral church is called the “cathedral” because it is where the “cathedra” is located), each parish church also has a special chair. It is called the “presider's chair.” Only the priest who is presiding, or leading, the liturgy sits in that chair. Do you see the presider's chair in your parish church?

Choose one of the activities below to do to help celebrate the Feast of the Chair of Peter, Apostle.

1. Write a prayer asking God to bless and guide the Pope, and all those who lead the Church.
2. Find news articles about the Pope, and make a collage out of them.
3. Draw a picture of the Pope sitting on his “cathedra” – his special chair.
4. Draw a picture of Jesus with Saint Peter, the Apostle.