

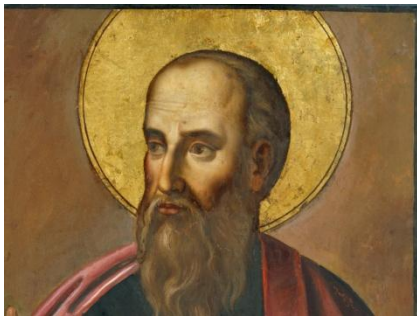
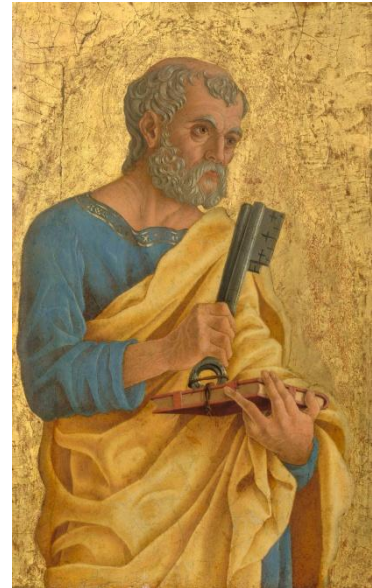
## Festivals and Saints' Days (w/c 28<sup>th</sup> June)

29<sup>th</sup> June - the feast commences with Solemn Evensong on Sunday, 28<sup>th</sup> June

### Saint Peter and Paul - Apostles, martyrs

Saint Peter and Saint Paul are considered two foundational figures in the life of the Church, under Christ. There is a certain irony about their sharing a festival, since they do not seem to have been that close during their lives on earth.

**Saint Peter** is sometimes known as the *Prince of the Apostles*: he emerged as the leader of the twelve Apostles. Unlike many of the Apostles, Saint Peter appears often not just in the Gospels, but also in other New Testament texts. He is named as the author of two of the Epistles, but scholars doubt the authenticity of this. His very human side is often laid bare (eg when he denied Christ three times). None-the-less, he emerged as the leader of the Church, first in Jerusalem; but he travelled to Rome where he became the first bishop before being martyred during the persecutions of Nero. He is believed to be buried under the great Vatican basilica, which bears his name. The succession of popes from Saint Peter was increasingly considered to give them the highest status amongst bishops, even when the city of Rome lost its political dominance.



**Saint Paul**, today, after Jesus, is the dominant figure of the first generation of the Church; whether it seemed like this at the time is arguable. Paul started off as Saul from Tarsus; he appears to have been a man of some means and was a Roman citizen. As Saul, he persecuted Christians and, indeed, was on the way to Damascus to have another go when he experienced a dramatic conversion (Acts 9: 1 - 22; and 22: 3 - 16), which is where we get the phrase, "A Damascus Road experience." For a range of reasons he was viewed with a certain reserve by the Apostles and their associates.

After his conversion, he concentrated on the mission outside Israel: an arrangement, which was formalised at the so-called *Council of Jerusalem* (Acts 15). He was energetic in establishing churches and some of his letters to them form a significant part of the New Testament (though scholars doubt, in some cases, that letters attributed to him are authentically his). He was finally arrested and, having used the privilege of his citizenship to appeal to the Emperor, was taken to Rome. This is where the record finishes and we have no account of his end. However, the next generation of Christian literature tells us that he was martyred sometime between AD64 and AD68. His relics lie in the Church of Saint Paul without the Walls in Rome.

3<sup>rd</sup> July

## **Saint Thomas - *Apostle, martyr***

Although, in common with many of the Apostles, we know little about Thomas, he has a higher profile than some - especially in the Gospel of Saint John, where he is reported as speaking on several occasions. The most famous passage is John 20: 24 - 29, where he doubts the Resurrection of Christ. This episode has earned him the sobriquet of "Doubting Thomas." Tradition suggests that he travelled to India where he established several Church communities. He is also said to have been martyred there.

