

“Cathedra” literally means the established seat of the Bishop, placed in the mother church of a diocese which for this reason is known as a “cathedral”; it is the symbol of the Bishop’s authority and in particular, of his magisterium”, that is, the evangelical teaching which, as a successor of the Apostles, he is called to safeguard and to transmit to the Christian Community. When a Bishop takes possession of the particular Church that has been entrusted to him, wearing his mitre and holding the pastoral staff, he sits on the cathedra. From this seat, as teacher and pastor, he will guide the journey of the faithful in faith, hope, and charity.

So what was the “Chair” of St. Peter? Chosen by Christ as the “rock” on which to build the Church, he began his ministry in Jerusalem, after the Ascension of the Lord and Pentecost. The Church’s first “seat” was the Upper Room, and it is likely that a special place was reserved for Simon Peter in that room where Mary, Mother of Jesus, also prayed with the disciples. Subsequently, the See of Peter was Antioch, a city on the Oronte River in Syria, today Turkey, which at the time was the third metropolis of the Roman empire after Rome and Alexandria in Egypt. Peter was the first Bishop of that city, which was evangelized by Barnabas and Paul, where “the disciples were for the first time called Christians” (Acts 11:26)... prior to the reform of the calendar... also established a specific celebration of the Chair of Peter in Antioch. From there, Providence led Peter to Rome. Therefore, we have the journey from Jerusalem, the newly born Church, to Antioch, the first centre of the Church formed from pagans and also still united with the Church that came from the Jews. Then Peter went to Rome, the centre of the Empire...where he ended his race at the service of the Gospel with martyrdom.

So it is the See of Rome, which had received the greatest of honors, also has the honor that Christ entrusted to Peter of being at the service of all the particular Churches for the edification and unity of the entire People of God. The See of Rome, after St. Peter’s travels, thus came to be recognized as the See of the Successor of Peter, and its Bishop’s “cathedra” represented the mission entrusted to him by Christ to tend his entire flock...

\*\*(excerpted from: [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va))

## Prayer for the Feast of The “Chair” of St. Peter

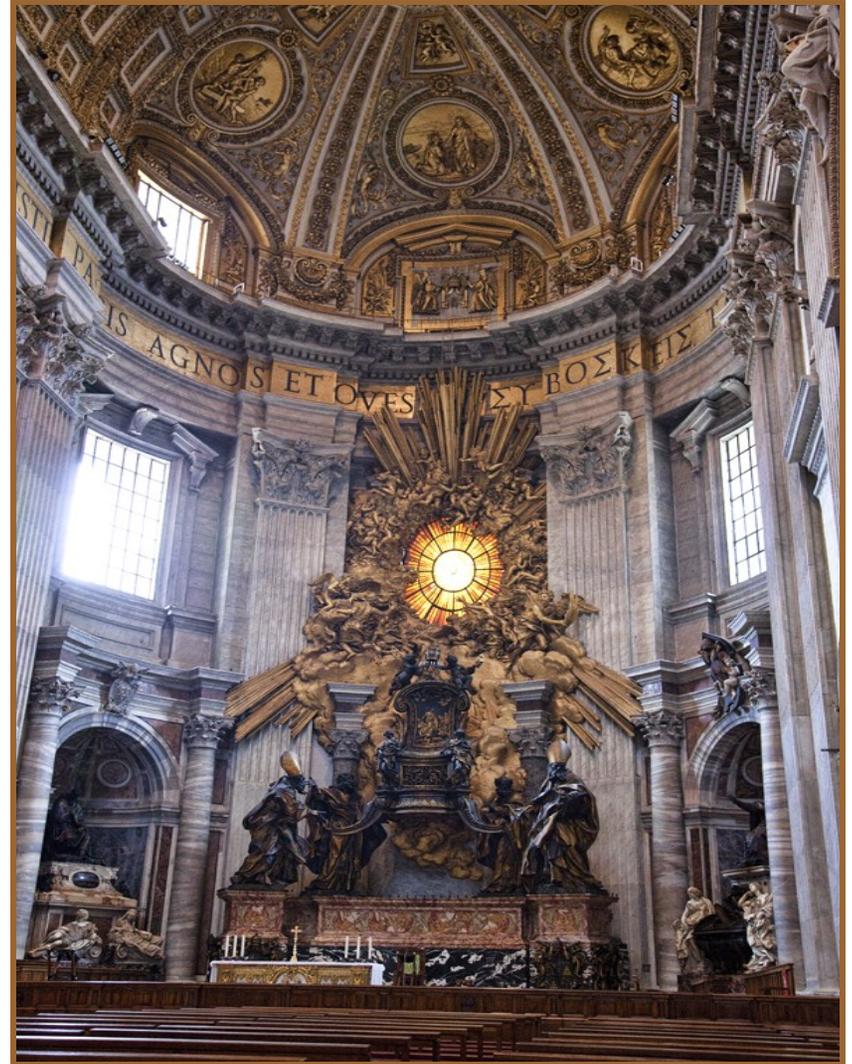
**\*\*\* O** God, Who by delivering to thy blessed Apostle Peter the keys of the kingdom of heaven, didst confer upon him the pontifical power of binding and of loosing, grant that, by the help of his intercession, we may be freed from the bonds of sin, Who livest and reignest, etc...

\*\*\*(excerpted from: [//acatholiclife.blogspot.com](http://acatholiclife.blogspot.com))

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## THE CHAIR OF PETER

February 22



*To celebrate the “Chair” of Peter...means, therefore, to attribute to it a strong spiritual significance and to recognize in it a privileged sign of the love of God, good and eternal Shepherd, who wants to gather the whole of his church and guide her along the way of salvation...*

(excerpted from: [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va))

## Scriptural Reflection

Thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. (Matthew 16:18)

## Historical Reference

*\*From the earliest times the Church at Rome celebrated on January 18 the memory of the day the Apostle held his first service with the faithful of the Eternal City. According to Duchesne and de Rossi, the “Martyrologium Hieronymianum” (Weissenburg manuscript) reads as follows: “XV KL.FEBO. Dedicatio cathedrae sci petri apostolic qua primo Rome petrus apostolus sedit” (fifteenth day before the calends of February, the dedication of the Chair of St. Peter the Apostle in which Peter the Apostle first sat at Rome). The Epternach manuscript (Codex Epternacensis) of the same work, says briefly: “cath.petri in roma” (the Chair of Peter in Rome).*

*In its present (ninth-century) form the “Martyrologium Hieronymianum” gives a second feast of the Chair of St. Peter for February 22, but all the manuscripts assign it to Antioch, not to Rome. Both are Roman feasts; with the February 22 given greater importance. This is clear from the Calendar of Philocalus drawn up in the year 354, and going back to the year 311; it makes no mention of the January feast. The Roman Church, at an early date celebrated a first and a second assumption of the Episcopal office in Rome by St. Peter. This double celebration was also held in two places, in the Vatican Basilica and in a cemetery (coemeterium) on the Via Salaria. At both places a chair (cathedra) was venerated which the Apostle had used as presiding officer of the assembly of the faithful. The first of these chairs stood in the Vatican Basilica, in the baptismal chapel built by Pope Damasus; then the neophytes were led from the baptistery to the pope seated on the chair where they received the Sacrament of Confirmation. In the apse of the Vatican Basilica there stood a second chair where sat amid the Roman clergy during the pontifical Mass. The Chair in the apse was made of marble and was built into the wall, while that of the baptistery was made of wood and was movable. The importance of this feast was heightened by the fact that February 22, was considered the anniversary of the day when Peter bore witness, by the Sea of Tiberias, to the Divinity of Christ and was again appointed by Christ to be the Rock of His Church. According to very ancient Western liturgies, February 22, was the day on which Peter was first chosen pope. The second chair is referred to by Abbot Johannes. He was commissioned by Pope Gregory the Great to collect in special little phials from the lamps which burned at the graves of the Roman martyrs (catacombs) for the Lombard queen, Theodolinda. According to the manuscript list of these oils*

preserved in the cathedral treasury of Monza, Italy, one of these vessels had on it the statement “oleo de sede ubi prius sedit sanctus Petrus” (oils from the chair where St. Peter first sat). Other ancient authorities describe the site as “ubi Petrus baptizbat” (where Peter baptized). It is now a certainty that site of the catacombs, or cemetery, was that of Priscilla and the villa of the Acilii (Acilii Glabrones), and is located on the Via Salaria because it came from the Apostolic Period. Priscilla was the wife of Acilius Glabrio who was executed under Domitian; and where is inscribed: “ubi prius sedit sanctus Petrus, ubi Petrus baptizabat” (where St. Peter first sat, where Peter baptized).

*The feast of the Cathedra (chair) Petri was therefore celebrated on the Via Salaria on January 18; while in the Vatican Basilica it was observed on February 22. This great festival could be celebrated with great pomp in the basilica erected by Constantine the Great over the grave of St. Peter and in a chapel far distant from the city on the Via Salaria. The chapel was where Peter first exercised at Rome the Episcopal office and commemorates the Apostles long absence from Rome, while the Basilica celebrates Christian worship in the city of Rome itself.*

*While the two chairs were the visible memorials of the earliest origins of Peter’s Apostolic work at Rome, the recollection of his arrival in the city is still preserved in the litaniae majores (greater litanies) on April 25. On this day is also celebrated the feast of St. Mark, whom St. Peter had sent to Alexandria in Egypt. Antioch and Alexandria, the two most important patriarchates of the East, were, in common with Rome, founded by Peter. Gregory the Great refers to this spiritual relationship with the roman Patriarch of the West, in a letter to the Patriarch Eulogius (P.L. LXXVII, 899): “Though there are many Apostles, pre-eminence of authority belongs permanently to none other than the Chair of the Prince of the Apostles, which Chair though established in three places remains nevertheless that of one and the same Apostle. He lifted it to the highest dignity in the place of Rome where he deigned to fix his residence and end his life. He honored it in the city of Alexandria, to which he sent his disciple, the Evangelist Mark. He strengthened it in the city of Antioch, where, though destined to depart, he sat for seven years. Since therefore the Chair in which now by divine authority three bishops preside is the identical chair of the self-same Peter, I take myself whatever good I hear coming from you”.*

*\*(excerpted from: www.catholic.org)*

## Reflections By Pope Benedict XVI

*\*\*On Wednesday, 22 February 2006, in his speech to the general audience “On this rock I will build my Church”, and attended by the naming Archbishop Sean Patrick O’Malley, O.F.M.Cap. Of Boston, U.S.A. as being selected to the College of Cardinals, the Pope address the audience as follows: Today, the Latin-rite liturgy celebrates the Feast of the Chair of St. Peter. This is a very ancient tradition, proven to have existed in Rome since the fourth century. On it we give thanks to God for the mission he entrusted to the Apostle Peter and his Successors.*