

## Holy Hero for February

### **Celebrating the Feast of the Chair of St. Peter; Feb. 22**

Are you a leader? Even though Simon had faults and weaknesses, Jesus recognized the strength and leadership qualities that he possessed. Jesus said to Simon the fisherman, “You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church.”

(Matthew 16:18) The name ‘*Peter*’ means *rock*. Peter was the first to realize that Jesus was the Messiah. After the Resurrection, Jesus appeared to the apostles and asked Peter, “Do you love me?” Peter answered ‘yes’ and the Lord commanded him, “Feed my lambs...Tend my sheep.” (John 21:16) Jesus was entrusting Peter to guide and lead His Church on earth.



After being filled with the Holy Spirit on the first Pentecost, Peter boldly took up the great mission of leading Christ’s young Church. At first, Peter preached the Gospel in Jerusalem and Antioch; he then went to Rome to spread the Good News. Peter became the first Bishop of Rome, a title that has been given to every pope through the ages. He made Rome the home of the Universal Church.

In St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome, there is a carefully protected chair believed to contain pieces of the throne that St. Peter once sat upon and taught the faithful of ancient Rome. Each year on February 22, this chair emerges, adorned with candles, to once again celebrate the Feast of the Chair of St. Peter. But this feast is more about the *symbolism* of the chair than the chair itself. It is the symbol of the authority given to Peter to rule the Church and the special gift from God to teach “*ex cathedra*” or “*from the chair*”. (Also known as *infallibly*-this means when teaching “*ex cathedra*” on faith and morals, the pope is free from error.) It is Catholic tradition for every pope and bishop since Peter to preach from a special chair in their cathedral church.

St. Peter died a martyr in Rome, but ever since then, there has always been a bishop of Rome; the pope. This feast day is the perfect time to pray for our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, as he rules the Church in Jesus’ name, just as St. Peter did.