



## Feast of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul (July 12)

*“I believe...in One Holy, Ecumenical (catholic) and Apostolic Church...” (from the Nicene Creed)*

After the Feast of Pentecost, the Holy Church has established that the entire week be free from fasting (just as after Pascha and the Nativity). Then on the following Monday, we begin observing the Apostles’ Fast which culminates with the Feast of the Apostles Peter and Paul on July 12th.

The Holy Apostolic Church, the Mystical Body of Christ on earth, was founded on the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles and Disciples. While it might seem as though it was literally only the Twelve Apostles who founded our Holy Church, Sacred Tradition says that to fulfill the prophecy of Joel (Joel 2:28-29), the Holy Spirit descended not only on the twelve chosen Apostles, but also upon ALL those who were with them “with one accord and in one place” (Acts 2:1), that is on the whole Church. This is why on the icons for Pentecost are usually represented Apostles not belonging to the Twelve—Apostle Paul (sitting with Apostle Peter at the head of the circle of Apostles), and among the Seventy Apostles, Luke the Evangelist and Mark the Evangelist. (*from The Meaning of Icons p. 208*)

The Holy Church has always understood its “apostolicity” in a spiritual, rather than a literal or administrative sense since the very beginning. Our Lord Jesus Christ has always been and always will be the Head of the Church. He gave authority to the Apostles and their successors, the bishops of the church, and yet as He said before His Ascension “I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” St. Ignatius the God-Bearer calls the Lord the “Invisible Bishop.” St. Paul refers to Christ as the eternal High Priest of His Church in his Epistle to the Hebrews.

When the Lord once said to St. Peter, ‘thou art Peter and on this rock I build My Church,’ Blessed Augustine says that it is the CONFESSION of St. Peter that is the rock, not Peter personally. His confession was the recognition of Christ, “*Thou art truly the Christ, the Son of the Living God.*” As Bl. Augustine also says, the rock of this confession does not come FROM

Peter, but rather comes from Christ—just as the Christian is from Christ, and not Christ from the Christian.

As we observe the Apostle's Fast and celebrate the Feast of the Holy Apostles, let us contemplate the truth of the 'one Holy, Ecumenical and Apostolic Church' that is established upon the rock of the confession of Christ. This is the way we must walk, as heirs of the Holy Apostles and all those who confess Christ. Amen!