

LITURGY BYTES

June Saints – Part 2



This week we will focus our reflection on *St. John the Baptist*, whose feast is celebrated on *June 24th*, and *Sts. Peter and Paul*, who the Church honors on *June 29th*.

John the Baptist was called by Jesus to be the greatest of all who preceded him (Luke 7:28). As we know, John spent much time in the desert. He began to announce the coming of the kingdom and to call everyone to reform. His main purpose was to prepare the way for Jesus. John attracted many people to the banks of the Jordan River. Some even thought that he might be the Messiah. John constantly talked of Jesus as the Messiah and even baptized Jesus. After this, Jesus entered publicly into the community of those awaiting the Messiah (Matthew 3:15). St. John's attitude towards Jesus was, *He must increase; I must decrease* (John 3:30). The scriptures during the Advent season focus quite a bit on John and all he did to prepare the people for Jesus.

Sts. Peter and Paul are both vastly different men and important to the history of the Church. In the year 67 AD, they were martyred in Rome during the persecutions ordered by the emperor Nero against the Christians. One was crucified upside down and the other beheaded. You might wonder why the Church chose to honor both of them on the same day. Actually, the feast was made to divert attention from a pagan feast on that day and make it a Christian celebration.

Peter was an ardent and impulsive person and expected the Messiah to be not only a spiritual guide, but also a warrior. The personality and charisma of Jesus conquered Peter, even though he denied Jesus three times. On the other hand, Paul never knew Jesus. He persecuted Christians but was struck blind one day and converted. He journeyed through many regions preaching and writing to these communities. Actually, Paul was known as Jesus' first missionary. It does make sense that both these men are celebrated together because of their common bond to spread the Gospel message!

Have a blessed, safe, and mission-driven week ahead! ~~~ *Michele Hall*