

These days: We are in  
Alumni hall chapel for  
late facilities.

University of Notre Dame

Religious Bulletin

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Tomorrow at 4:45. Weekly Hour  
of Adoration in Sacred Heart  
Church. Drop in.

The Feast Of St. Peter's Chair

Today's feast is that of St. Peter's Chair at Rome. It's a little odd, isn't it-- this feast day of a chair? What is the meaning of all this?

In the chapel behind the main altar of St. Peter's basilica in Rome there are some interesting relics -- some oaken boards - the remains of the episcopal chair of St. Peter when he guided the destinies of the early Church. Except for his tomb, the chair is the most precious relic of St. Peter, where the Prince of the Apostles taught and guided the Flock of Christ.

It is not just another ornament. It is a symbol of the See of Peter as the Center of Unity, the symbol of the primacy and supremacy of the Saint and of his successors on the papal throne. The Chair of St. Peter is like the Cross of Christ, a symbol of a tremendous truth. The Cross stands for God's Divine love manifested in the redemptive act of the Cross. The Chair symbolizes the infallibility of the Pope and his right to rule and teach the whole Church as the Vicar of Christ upon earth.

Thus, the period of prayer which we begin on Wednesday for religious unity throughout the world is called the Chair of Unity Octave. It emphasizes this truth of the unique position and function of the See of Peter in the world. The Holy Father Himself has called attention to this fact when he designated the intention of the Apostleship of Prayer for the month of January: "That those seeking the true Church may learn to recognize the Primacy of the Bishop of Rome as the very foundation of all Church unity".

This Unity Octave is primarily and essentially a period of prayer. For prayer is the most universal and effective means of achieving the goal of Our Lord as expressed on that first Holy Thursday: "That they all may be one." Study, missionary labor, meetings, and specialized techniques all have their place; but they must be inspired and implemented by sincere and persevering prayer. There is no substitute for prayer in begging God for Unity.

Pope Pius sounded this call to the faithful for a crusade of prayer when he declared, "There is nothing that conforms more closely to the will of God than the gathering together and bringing back of all souls to the one fold under one shepherd."

Hence, the purpose of our prayers for the duration of the Unity Octave -- the blessing of religious unity upon a divided and irreligious world. The task may seem impossible, the difficulties insurmountable. And yet, by God's grace, unity can be achieved; we can realize oneness within the Fold of Christ ruled over by the successor of St. Peter. The Holy Father today sits in the same See as the Prince of the Apostles, and rules the Church just as did St. Peter 19 centuries ago.

Can You Spare 10 Minutes?

Since that unity will be accomplished in the measure that men pray for it -- that's exactly where you enter this apostolic scheme. Each day of the Octave, at 5:15 in Alumni hall chapel, there will be a brief service consisting of the Prayer For Union, followed by Benediction -- a matter of 10 minutes. Drop in on your way to the dining hall for the evening meal, and pray for the success of this universal cause, maybe even for one of your own family, or an acquaintance. This is the week when all of us should become apostles -- as well as scholars.

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PRAYERS - Deceased: father of John Verhoeven, '39; Former Prof. Frank T. Flynn. Ill: Father of John Frankl, '50; James McDonald; grandmother of Roger Kelly of Cavanaugh.