

The Golden Legend or Lives Of The Saints
Compiled by **Jacobus de Voragine, Archbishop of Genoa, 1275**
Englished by **William Caxton, First Edition 1483**
From the **Temple Classics** Edited by **F.S. Ellis**
[Lacunae supplied by W. G. Ryan's translation]
[Also available in Adobe Acrobat \(.pdf\) format](#)

44// OF THE CHAIRING OF ST. PETER THE APOSTLE

The chair is said in three manners, that is, the chair royal, as it is said in the book of Kings: David sitting in a chair. And there is a chair of priests, as Regum primo [I Kings], Eli, the priest sitting upon a chair. And the third is the chair for a master as is said, Matt. xxiii: Upon the chair of Moses, etc. Then St. Peter sat in a chair royal, for he was prince of the apostles, and he sat in the chair of priests, for he was lord of all the priests, and in the chair of the master, for he was a great doctor of Christian men. The first was of equity, the second of quantity, and the third of truth and of virtue.

CAUSES WHEREFORE THIS FEAST IS HALLOWED AND ESTABLISHED

Holy church halloweth the feast of St. Peter the apostle, and this day was St. Peter honorably enhanced in the city of Antioch, and set in the chair as a bishop. Many causes there be wherefore this feast is hallowed and established.

St. Peter's Chair in Antioch

Of whom the first is, as is said in a sermon of this feast, that when St. Peter went for to preach the word of God and founded holy church by his predication, Niceta and Aquila showed unto the city of Antioch that Peter the apostle of God came thither, wherefore the people and also the nobles of the city came against [toward] him, and knowledged themselves culpable of that they had holden of the predication [preaching] of Simon Magus, which was an enchanter. After, they did to be brought tofore him all such people as were vexed with divers maladies and sicknesses, of whom there were so many that they might not be numbered.

St. Peter beheld their repentance, and also that they believed firmly in the name of God, and anon lift up his hands unto heaven, and made his prayer to God saying: O God, Father Almighty, I yield to thee thankings in this that thou hast worthily fulfilled the promises of thy blessed Son, by which all creatures may know that thou art one only God in heaven and in earth.

And after, he ascended up into an high place, and all the multitude of sick men were brought tofore him, and he said to them in this manner: Ye that see me a mortal man as ye be, ween ne suppose not ye that by me ye may be healed, but by him that is descended from heaven to earth, which giveth to all them that believe in him full health of body and of soul. This ought ye to believe to the end that all may know that ye that thus believe entirely with all your heart in Jesu Christ may be made whole and guerished by him.

And anon all they that were sick cried with a high voice: We believe that Jesu Christ is very God.

Suddenly a light appeared there, and all the sick people were guerished [healed] and healed of whatsoever malady they had. And that same day the Holy Ghost showed so greatly his grace, that from the least unto the most, all believed in our Lord Jesu Christ. And there were baptized in seven days more than ten thousand persons of men, women, and children, and also Theophilus, the lord and provost of the city, to whom St. Peter had raised his son which had been fourteen years dead.

And some say that of his palace he made a church in the which all the people set up a chair for St. Peter to sit in more higher, for to preach the doctrine of Jesu Christ, and the better to be heard and seen. And of the exalting thus of St. Peter into this chair, this feast taketh the name of the chairing of St. Peter. And in this church was St. Peter seven years, and from thence he went to Rome and governed the church of Rome twenty-five years.

St. Peter's Tonsure

That other reason why this feast was established was for the reverence of the crown or tonsure of his head, which yet clerks bear and have, for like as some say, at this journey was first found the crown of the clerks. For when St. Peter preached at the first time in the city of Antioch, the paynims [pagans] sheared him upon his head above, like a fool, in despising Christian law. And because this was done to St. Peter to do him despite and shame, it was sith stablished that the clergy should have his crown shaven in sign of right great honour and authority.

And it is to wit that in the crown be three things:

First, the head is discovered [uncovered] and bare above and the hair cut away, and the crown is round. There be three reasons why the head is bare, of which St. Denis assigneth the twain, and saith the rasure and cutting off of the hair signifieth pure life and clean without any arraying withoutforth; for like as hairs be naturally for to adorn the head, right so deform they the head when they be cut off by mockery or otherwise. Also good manners which ought to adorn the clean life, deform the holy conversation [i.e., directedness toward Heaven] when they be left and taken away by habits covetous and proud. Also the rasure or shaving which is on the overmost part of the head signifieth that between God and them ought to be nothing ne mean that should displease God, but their love should be in God without any letting and empeshment and should address in him their thoughts.

The second thing that is in the crown is that the hairs be shaven clean away. By that is signified that the clerks ought to take away from their hearts all vain thoughts which might let [hinder] and empesh [hinder] the service divine, and also ought to be withdrawn from all temporal business, and only to have their necessities.

The third thing that is in the crown is that it is round, and this figure seemeth good by many reasons. The first is that a round figure hath neither beginning nor end. The second is, in a round crown be no corners, and as St. Bernard saith whereas be corners there is gladly filth, and that is to be understood that the clerks ought not to have in their hearts no corners where the filth of sins might assemble, but ought to have a clean conscience, and also they ought to have truth in their mouths. For as saith St. Jerome: Truth seeketh no corners. The third reason is, for like as the

figure of a crown is most fair among all other, so the conversation of clerks or priests ought to be best adorned of good manners among all other lay people. The fourth reason is, for like as a crown hath but one way round and no figure, like as St. Austin saith: There is none so simple a figure as that which hath but one way, also the clerks ought to be simple in their conversation, without fiction and pride.

CONCLUSION

And it is to wit that holy church halloweth of St. Peter three feasts in the year for three gifts that he hath power to give to the people. The first is the chair, for he giveth absolution of sins. The second feast is called *advincula*, that is the first day of the August, for he by his power transumeth the pain perpetual due for sins mortal into pain temporal. The third feast is of his martyrdom, for he hath power to release some pains of penance enjoined for the sins confessed, and for these three causes he is digne and worthy honorably to be served and worshipped.

Let us then pray to him that he may impetre and get to us remission of all our sins, and after this short transitory life we may come to everlasting joy and glory in heaven. Amen.

The [iconography of St. Peter](#) is available at the [Christian iconography website](#).

For other saints, see the [index to this Golden Legend website](#).

Scanned by Robert Blackmon. bob_blackmon@mindspring.com.

This text was taken from the [Internet Medieval Source Book](#). The Sourcebook is a collection of public domain and copy-permitted texts related to medieval and Byzantine history.

Permission is granted for electronic copying, distribution in print form for educational purposes and personal use. If you do reduplicate the document, indicate the source. No permission is granted for commercial use.

E-text © Paul Halsall, September 2000
halsall@fordham.edu

Reformatted with paragraphs, rubrics, italics, and explanatory insertions by Richard Stracke, rstracke@aug.edu