February 22

The See of St. Peter the Apostle

On February 22, the ancient Romans honored the memory of their dead and ate at their tombs, around the empty 'seat' reserved for deceased relatives as a sign of their presence in their family's midst.
The Depositio Martyrum, the Church of Rome's oldest calendar, shows that in the year 354 this pagan feast had already been replaced by the memorial of the See of Peter - that is, the commemoration of the beginning of Peter's Roman episcopate.
Later, two different memorials of Peter's ministry were celebrated: on January 18, the Gallic church celebrated the beginning of his episcopal service in Rome, and on February 22, his ministry in Antioch was remembered.
Today's feast, observed by the Catholic Church alone, was instituted so that Peter, like Paul, would have a second celebration recalling his specific mission in the church.
The memorial of Peter's Roman episcopate allows the Catholic Church to emphasize two things: first, the Church of Rome's apostolic foundation, and second, the service of presiding in love that the ancient tradition recognized as the role of Peter and of his successors. Whether these successors include all bishops, according to the Orthodox churches' current interpretation, or only bishops of Rome, according to the interpretation of Scripture that has prevailed in the West, is of course a debated matter.

BIBLICAL READINGS
1 Pet 5:1-4; Mt 16:13-19

Margaret of Cortona (1247-1297) witness

Margaret of Cortona, a Third-Order Franciscan, died on February 22, 1297.
Born in 1247 in Laviano, on Lake Trasimeno in central Italy, Margaret lost her mother when she was young. Unhappy with her stepmother, she fled at the age of sixteen to the castle of the count Arsenio of Montepulciano, with whom she lived for ten years. When the man she loved was killed in a hunting accident, Margaret was rejected by her own family and by the family of Arsenio. Abandoned by everyone and with a son to raise, born during her relationship with the Tuscan nobleman, she was taken in by two noble women of Cortona. They introduced her to the Friars Minor, with whom she spent much of her life. Margaret received the help she needed from the Franciscans, and in turn contributed a great deal to the formation of their spirituality with her extremely austere lifestyle and total dedication to the very poor. She showed great love for others and was a mystic of Christ's passion, from which she drew the strength to love. She also undertook countless initiatives in favor of the poor and the sick, in whom she never tired of seeking the face of her Lord.
She died at the age of fifty in a small cell in the rocky cliff above Cortona, disappointed by the failure of the Franciscan chapters to uphold the Order's initial rigor, but seen by all as a model of life according to the Gospel.

BIBLICAL READINGS
Ez 18,21-23.27-28; Lc 15,1-10

THE CHURCHES REMEMBER...

WESTERN CATHOLICS:
The See of St. Peter the Apostle

COPTS AND ETHIOPIANS (14 amsir/yakkatit):
Severus of Antioch (d. 538), bishop (Orthodox Coptic Church)

LUTHERANS:
Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg (d. 1719), missionary in India

MARONITES:
The See of St. Peter in Antioch

ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN AND GREEK CATHOLICS:
Invention of the relics of the holy martyrs at Eugenius, a quarter of Costantinople (395-408)
Invention of the relics of Innocent of Irkutsk (1805; Russian Church)

WEST SYRIAN ORTHODOX:
The See of St. Peter in Antioch