

RESTORATIONS OF THE STATUES OF SAINT PETER AND SAINT PAUL AT THE FOOT OF THE PARVIS OF THE VATICAN BASILICA

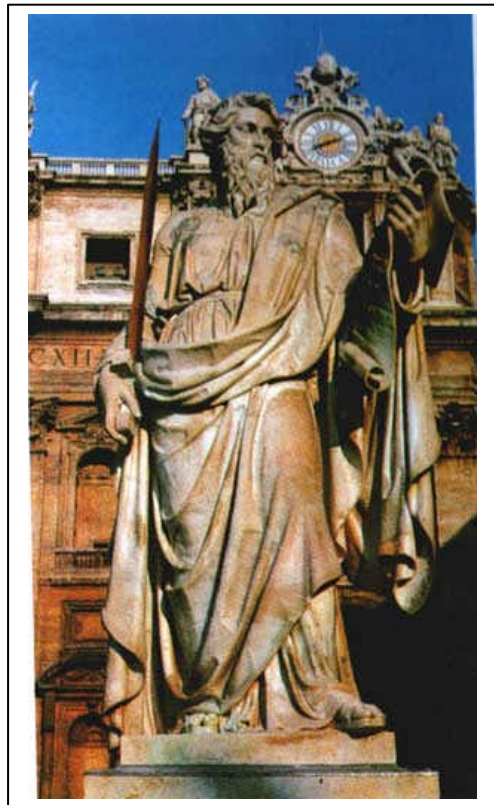
In the 15th century, at the request of Pope Pius II (Piccolomini, 1458-1464), the statues of Sts. Peter and Paul were placed at the foot of the stairway in front of the ancient basilica of Saint Peter.



Some attribute these valuable works to Paolo Romano, others to Mino da Fiesole, others still to Mino del Reame. When the 16th-17th century church was built, the architect Carlo Maderno kept the two statues in front of the new facade, just in the front of their original position; and in 1667, when the grand colonnade was completed, Bernini positioned these same statues, although no longer appropriate because of their size, at the foot of the new steps in front of the basilica. Finally, in the middle of the 19th century, Pius IX (Mastai Ferretti, 1846-1878) saw it fitting to replace the 15th century statues with those that we see today. The new statues of Sts. Peter and Paul were commissioned by Pope Gregory XVI (Cappellari, 1831-1846) for the Basilica of Saint Paul Outside the Walls (San Paolo Fuori le Mura), but they were never placed there. Instead, plaster models of the two statues were donated by Pius IX to the Church of San Carlo ai Catinari, where they were placed to the sides of the

High Altar, in the apsidal niche.

The statue of St. Peter is the work of the Venetian sculptor Giuseppe De Fabris (1790-1822), a student of Canova (1757-1822). It does not display the excessive academic precision common to many sculptures of that period.



The Apostle is represented with two keys in his right hand, one silver-plated, the other gold-plated, and in his left hand, a scroll bearing the writing: «ET TIBI DABO CLAVES REGNI COELORUM» (Mt. 16: 19).

The statue of St. Paul was sculpted by the Bolognese Adamo Tadolini (1788-1868), who worked in Canova's studio in Rome. The Apostle has a sword in his right hand, a book in his left and a scroll that reads: <<NEL DIO DELLA MIA FORZA OGNI CIBO E' ENERGIA>>.

Work on the two statues began in 1838. In 1847 they were placed at the foot of the stairs of Saint Peter's on marble pedestals that two years later would be completed with the coats of arms of Pope Pius IX and the Fabbrica di San Pietro. In 1987 the Order of the Knights of Columbus offered the restoration of the two statues of the Apostles Peter and Paul and of their respective bases, in order to complete the extensive cleaning and reinforcement work being done on the façade and the thirteen

statues located above. After being kept in the parvis of the basilica for one-hundred-and-fifty years, the two statues showed signs of the formation of black crusts, the

proliferation of lichen, and the pulverisation of the marble surfaces. The restoration was divided then into an initial stage of cleaning with atomised water to remove any impurities, deposits of atmospheric particles and guano residue, and a second stage of reinforcing the marble surfaces through the imbibition of ethyl silicate and epoxy resins which were made to penetrate deep into the cracks. The presence of copper oxide in St. Paul's scroll and sword also led to a new gilding of the sword and of the letters of the scroll.