

## **SAINTS PETER AND PAUL**

**100 years ago yesterday Gavrilo Princip drew his pistol and fired two shots that killed the Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife Sophie. As a result, Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia, hurtling many nations into World War I. Over 16 million people died. When he pulled the trigger, Gavrilo Princip was 19 years old. He thought he was doing the right thing for Serbia. The action of one teenager changed the history of the world.**

**We don't know who killed St. Peter and who killed St. Paul, but it is not hard to imagine youths about the same age. Their deaths are not recorded in the bible, but tradition holds that they both died on June 29 in the year 67 AD. Peter was crucified on a hill that even in those days was called the Vatican. Paul, a Roman citizen, could not be crucified inside the city limits, so he was taken outside the walls and beheaded. The executioners must have been young men strong enough to perform these actions, and zealots who thought they were doing the right thing. They also changed the history of the world.**

**In Missouri, people aged 19 and under commit about one fifth of all the murders in the State. They have learned violence as a way of life. They are forever changing the lives of this generation and the next. The families of those who have been killed are grieving; so are the families of those who did the killing.**

**Sometimes people blame religion for the wars of the world. When humans become inflamed by belief, they claim the highest authority for acts of violence. However, true religion can end the world's wars. Our beliefs are peaceful, and they offer hope that we can solve our problems without violence.**

**Saint Paul was born with the name Saul. As a young man, he killed Christians. St. Peter was also probably a young man when he became a disciple. At the garden of Gethsemane he cut off the ear of the slave of the high priest, and Jesus told Peter to put away his sword. Both Peter and Paul were zealots, but Christ channeled their energy away from violence and toward the gospel.**

**The parents of our teenagers are trying to give them the light of faith. During those dangerous years, young people form strong opinions about their family, their church, their country, God and themselves. If they believe strongly, they will take strong actions. Some people think that the teachings of Christ hold little interest for the young, but this is not true. Many of them will hear the challenge of his words and discover that he is the one for whom they have longed. We must continue our efforts to lead young people away from weapons and toward faith. If we give them an example of peace, they will have the tools they need to do the right thing, and to change the history of the world.**