

February 22

The Chair of St. Peter

Galilee

One day, Simon (whom Jesus would later name Peter) and his brother Andrew were out fishing. Jesus called out to them and told them to leave their fishing nets and to follow Him. Jesus said that He would make them fishers of men. Simon and the disciples followed Jesus as He healed the blind, the sick, and the lame; He even forgave sins. Because Jesus did all these wonderful things, people talked about Him. Jesus asked His disciples what the people were saying about Him, and they told him that the people thought He was a great prophet. But Simon knew Jesus was more than a prophet. He said, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." Jesus declared that His Father had blessed Simon by revealing to him this truth. Jesus gave Simon the name Peter and proclaimed him the rock on which He would build His Church. Jesus also gave Peter the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 16:13–20).

But even though Peter was especially blessed by God, he was still human, weak and full of sin. At the Last Supper, Jesus told Peter, "This very night before the cock crows, you will deny me three times." Peter could not imagine denying Jesus and said he would die rather than do such a thing (Matthew 26:34–35). That night, Jesus was betrayed by Judas and arrested. Peter followed Jesus and the soldiers to the high priest's house. There a servant recognized Peter as one of Jesus's disciples. Peter was frightened of being arrested also, so he denied knowing Jesus. Two other people recognized Peter, and two more times he denied Jesus. At that moment, a sharp cock crow filled the dark night. Immediately, Peter remembered Jesus's prophesy of his denial. Peter fled in shame and deep sorrow, and the Romans crucified Jesus (Matthew 26:69–75).

When Jesus rose from the dead, He appeared to his disciples many times before He ascended to His Father in heaven. One of these times, Jesus asked Peter, "Do you love me?" Jesus asked Peter this question three times, the number of times Peter had denied him. And every time Peter answered "yes" (John 21:15–17).

Jesus made Peter the first pope, commanding him to feed His sheep, which meant that He was asking Peter to take special care of His flock, the Church. When we celebrate the Feast of the Chair of St. Peter, we think of the chair as a throne, representing Peter's office as pope. We celebrate how Jesus made Peter the leader of His Church on earth. St. Peter, help me to always remain faithful to Jesus!



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