

Historic Overview: Simon Peter (the Rock) and Andrew

Simon Peter and his brother Andrew, were the sons of John or of Jonah, they were from the village of Bethsaida in the province of Galilee. Both were Jesus disciples later becoming apostles. They are both venerated in multiple churches. Peter is regarded as the first Pope by the Catholic Church, while Andrew is considered the founder and patron Saint of the Orthodox Church.

What we know from the NT:

At the beginning of Jesus' public life, Andrew and Simon Peter were said to have occupied the same house at Capernaum.[Mk. 1:21-29]

The Gospel of John states that Andrew was a disciple of John the Baptist, whose testimony first led him and John the Evangelist to follow Jesus.[Jn. 1:35-40] Andrew at once recognized Jesus as the Messiah, and hastened to introduce him to his brother.[Jn. 1:41]

In Matthew and Mark, Jesus called Simon and his brother Andrew to be "fishers of men." (Matt. 4:18–19; Mk. 1:16–17)

Peter and Andrew were in a fishing partnership along with the sons of Zebedee, James and John. The Gospel of John also depicts Peter fishing, even after the resurrection of Jesus, in the story of the "Catch of 153 fish."

In Luke 5:3, Simon Peter owns the boat that Jesus uses to preach to the multitudes who were pressing on him at the shore of Lake Gennesaret. Jesus then amazes Simon and his companions James and John (Andrew is not mentioned) by telling them to lower their nets, whereupon they catch a huge number of fish. Immediately after this, they follow him (Luke 5:4–11).

Peter-the Rock

In a dialogue between Jesus and his disciples (Matthew 16:13-20), Jesus asks, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" The disciples give various answers. When he asks, "Who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answers, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." In turn, Jesus declares Peter to be "blessed" for having recognized Jesus' true identity and attributes this recognition to a divine revelation. Then Jesus addresses Simon by what seems to have been the nickname "Peter" and says, "On this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hell will not prevail against it."

Peter's role was quite interesting. While he served as the spokesman for the group, and being given the title "the Rock" by Jesus himself, Peter is also the example of "little faith" in Matthew 14 ("O you of little faith, why did you doubt?").

Peter is often depicted in the Gospels as spokesman of all the Apostles. Paul affirms that Peter had the special charge of being apostle to the Jews, just as he, Paul, was apostle to the Gentiles.

Walking on water

Three of the four canonical Gospels—Matthew, Mark and John—recount the story of Jesus walking on water. Matthew additionally describes Peter walking on water for a moment, but beginning to sink when his faith wavered. [Matt. 14:28–31]

Washing of feet

At the beginning of the Last Supper, Jesus washed his disciples' feet. Peter initially refused to let Jesus wash his feet, but when Jesus responded: "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me", Peter replied: "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head". [Jn. 13:2-11]

Denial of Jesus by Peter

All four canonical gospels recount that, during the Last Supper, Jesus foretold that Peter would deny him three times before the following cockcrow. In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus' prediction of Peter's denial is coupled with a prediction that all the apostles ("you," plural) would be "sifted like wheat," but that it would be Peter's task ("you," singular), when he had turned again, to strengthen his brethren. In a reminiscent scene in John's epilogue, Peter affirms three times that he loves Jesus.

Arrest of Jesus

The three synoptic Gospels all mention that, when Jesus was arrested, one of his companions cut off the ear of a servant of the High Priest. The Gospel of John also includes this event and names Peter as the swordsman and Malchus as the victim. [Jn. 18:10] Luke adds that Jesus touched the ear and miraculously healed it. [Lk. 22:50]

Empty tomb

In John's gospel, Peter is the first person to enter the empty tomb, although the women and the beloved disciple see it before him. [Jn. 20:1–9] In Luke's account, the women's report of the empty tomb is dismissed by the apostles, and Peter is the only one who goes to check for himself. In fact, he runs to the tomb. After seeing the grave clothes he goes home, apparently without informing the other disciples. [Lk. 24:1–12]

Resurrection appearances

Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians contains a list of resurrection appearances of Jesus, the first of which is an appearance to Peter. Here Paul apparently follows an early tradition that Peter was the first to see the risen Christ, which however did not seem to have survived to the time when the Gospels were written.

In the final chapter of the Gospel of John, Peter, in one of the resurrection appearances of Jesus, three times affirmed his love for Jesus, balancing his threefold denial, and Jesus reconfirmed Peter's position. [Jn. 21:15–17]

Book of Acts

The author of the Acts of the Apostles portrays Peter as an extremely important figure within the early Christian community, with Peter delivering a significant sermon during Pentecost. According to the same book, Peter took the lead in selecting a replacement for Judas Iscariot. [Acts 1:15] He was twice arraigned, with John, before the Sanhedrin and directly defied them.[Acts 4:7–22] [5:18–42] He undertook a missionary journey to Lydda, Joppa and Caesarea, [9:32–10:2] becoming instrumental in the decision to evangelize the Gentiles.

Post-Resurrection History

After Jesus' ascension, Andrew preached along the Black Sea as far as the Volga and Kiev. Hence he became a patron saint of the Ukraine, Romania and Russia. According to tradition, he founded the Papal Office of Byzantium (Constantinople) in AD 38.

Andrew is said to have been martyred by crucifixion at the city of Patras (Patræ). Early texts, such as the *Acts of Andrew* known describe Andrew as bound, not nailed, on an X-shaped cross now commonly known as a "Saint Andrew's Cross" — supposedly at his own request, as he deemed himself unworthy to be crucified on the same type of cross as the one Jesus had been nailed to.

Peter on the other hand, worked to establish the church of Antioch, presiding for seven years as the city's bishop; from there he went on to preach to scattered communities of believers in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, and Asia Minor. He then went to Rome, where he became bishop for 25 years. He is said to have been put to death at the hand of Emperor Nero, being crucified upside down at his own request since he, too, saw himself unworthy to be crucified in the same way as Jesus.

Peter wrote two *Epistles*. The *Gospel of Mark* is also ascribed to him (as Mark was his disciple and interpreter). On the other hand, several books bearing his name—the Acts of Peter, Gospel of Peter, Preaching of Peter, Revelation of Peter, and Judgment of Peter—are considered Apocryphal by most Christian denominations.