

## Life

Peter was originally known as Simon and was a fisherman. He and his brother Andrew were called to follow Jesus. Jesus gave him another name "Cephas", which means "rock" and told him: "upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18). This sentence became the basis for the church to determine that Peter was the first pope. Peter followed Jesus to preach everywhere, witnessing the important moments of Jesus' transfiguration and his sorrow while praying in the Garden of Gethsemane. He often speaks on behalf of the twelve apostles. When others did not accept the sacrament of Holy Eucharist and left, he recognized Jesus as the Holy one from God; he also asked Jesus to let him walk on water, which shows he is passionate and straightforward, and he had faith in Jesus. Yet after Jesus was arrested, Peter denied the Lord three times. When Jesus turned around and looked at him, he immediately regretted and cried. After Jesus' resurrection, he entrusted Peter to continue his redemption plan. After Jesus' ascension, Peter took up leadership. The first time he preached, 3,000 people were baptized; he represented his disciples when he was questioned at the Sanhedrin. In addition, he was the first to propose selecting an apostle to replace Judas; he also broke with tradition and baptized gentiles. Peter was martyred in 64-67 AD. According to tradition, Peter regarded himself unworthy to be nailed to the cross like Jesus, and he was nailed up-side-down. He was buried in the Vatican Hill, under the current St. Peter's Basilica.

## Reflection/resolution

We may ask why Peter, who had followed Jesus for three years and witnessed countless miracles, could deny the Lord three times within one night? Is he particularly cowardly and afraid of death? In fact, he is very similar to us. At the press conference of "Lectio Petri: The Apostle Peter in History, Arts and Culture' initiative" series of activities, Cardinal Ravasi said: "Peter is an admirable person with a complicated character, and the gospel also tells about his faults and weaknesses in human nature. His experience is divided into different historical moments, we can call it 'stages', just like what a believer may experience today: calling, causing a crisis to abandon, conversion, and ultimate recovery."

On the night Peter denied the Lord, he had protected Jesus with his sword and showed no fear while facing the whole troop of soldiers and servants with weapons, but when Jesus rebuked him and said that he wanted to follow the will of the Father, Peter could not understand. His faith faced a major trial, and he fled like the other apostles. After that, he still cared about Jesus and followed him to the courtyard of the high priest. In there, he was asked if he was Jesus' disciple three times, and he denied Jesus three times. We are fortunate to keep our faith only because we have not been tested; otherwise no matter how much we love Jesus, once we encounter real pains or challenges in life, there is a possibility of us denying the Lord. Let us earnestly recite the Lord's Prayer: "lead us not into temptation", and rely on the protection of the Lord to avoid the danger of committing mortal sins. For the brothers and sisters who left the church because of doubts and pain, we also ask the Lord to let them, like Peter, quickly experience Jesus' forgiving and loving gaze, and repent.

## Prayer

Why did Peter, James and John all fell asleep in the Garden of Gethsemane? Even though Jesus himself woke them up many times, they could not keep him company even for one single hour. Luke's Gospel said that they fell asleep due to worries, and we could imagine since the Jews drank four glasses of wine and ate lamb during the Passover dinner, it would be difficult to remain sober when they arrived in the dark and quiet garden. We should also use this as a warning and make sure we sort out a time to pray every day, so as not to delay till late at night when we become physically and mentally exhausted. Otherwise the mind is willing but the body is weak, and as soon as we start we will be ready to "rest in the arms of the Lord".

May we learn from St. Peter to love Jesus and repent immediately if we sin.

St Peter, pray for us.