

The Feast of Saint Peter

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Date: 28 June 2026

Preacher: Seminarian Matthew Stuart

[0:00] In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Amen. Just now, we confessed our faith in the words of the Creed, which most of us have said so often that we can recite it without even thinking about it.

The danger of words that we know by heart is often that we stop hearing them. The question our Lord asks this morning is whether we recognize and believe what we confess.

In our Gospel reading, Jesus travels with his disciples into the region of Caesarea Philippi, a center of pagan worship and the site of a temple built for Caesar.

And it is in this place, surrounded by altars dedicated to false gods, that he asks his disciples this question. Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?

And they tell him, some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets. Now, the crowds meant this as praise, since to be counted among the prophets was a great honor.

[1:21] But thinking highly of Jesus is not the same as recognizing and believing who he truly is. And so he asks the disciples directly, Simon Peter answers him, You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.

Now, this is the first time in Matthew's Gospel that a disciple confesses the truth to Jesus directly.

And Peter is the one who says it. Our Lord then tells Peter where his answer truly comes from.

Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for the flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. You see, Peter didn't reason his way to this conclusion.

It was given to him. The Father opened his eyes to see what the crowds, for all their sincere opinions, could not see. His confession is a gift.

And the same is true for us. No one says that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit. The faith we all confess together in the creed is not something we came to believe by the capabilities of our own intellects.

[2:45] It's the Father's gift. The same gift he gave to Peter. Because of Peter's confession, our Lord makes him a promise.

And I also say to you that you are Peter. And on this rock, I will build my church. And the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

He gives Simon a new name, Peter, which means rock. And in the Aramaic language, our Lord was speaking, the name Peter and the word rock are the same.

So the saying is, you are rock. And on this rock, I will build my church. But Peter is the rock only because of what he confessed.

So he cannot be separated from his confession. And the confession itself rests on Christ, who is the true foundation of everything.

[3:46] The church is built on Peter's confession of Christ. And it is Christ who builds it. Our Lord then says in verse 19, Keys are given to stewards who are servants responsible for overseeing and maintaining order in their master's house.

Binding and loosing is the authority to forgive sins in Christ's name. The authority by which the church absolves the penitent. The same authority our Lord gives Peter here, he gives to all the apostles.

And it is handed down from them through the church. This is the beginning of the apostolic ministry. The office our bishops hold today as successors of the apostles.

And today on the feast of St. Peter, We see in him what belongs to the whole church. The calling to confess Christ as the son of the living God by the Father's grace.

And the promise that on this faith, Christ builds a church that the powers of death will never destroy. We heard about that promise in our epistle reading in Herod's prison.

[5 : 17] We read that Herod had already killed James and he imprisoned Peter, planning to bring him out for execution after the Passover feast. The church couldn't do anything but pray.

And pray she did without ceasing throughout the entire night. Peter himself slept between two soldiers bound with chains. And the angel had to strike his side to wake him up.

The chains fell from his wrists and the iron gate of the prison opened on its own. Then Peter walked out free. He thought that he was seeing a vision until he found himself alone in the street.

The gate that was built to keep prisoners from escaping could not hold him. And in the same way, the gates of Hades that Jesus spoke of at Caesarea Philippi would not prevail.

That same question our Lord asked the disciples, he also asks each of us. He asks who we say that he is. And he waits for us to answer alongside Peter.

[6 : 31] You are the Christ, the son of the living God. Peter staked everything on that answer. And in the end, it cost him his life.

The Lord asks the same devotion of us. When we come to the altar this morning, we come as those who have made that confession.

To be fed by his most precious body and blood. Within his church, that death cannot destroy. The father opened Peter's eyes.

And he has also opened ours. The confession that Peter made has been declared by Christians in every age since. And Christ is still building his church on it.

And the gates of hell will never prevail against it. Thanks be to God. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

[7 : 33] Amen. Amen.