

## **Saint Peter, the Spiritual Life, and Evangelization**

### **1. The Call of Peter to Discipleship and Evangelization**

#### **The Conversion and Call of Peter**

While the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, [Jesus] was standing by the lake of Gennesaret. And he saw two boats by the lake; but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon's, he asked him to put out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people from the boat. And when he had ceased speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." And Simon answered, "*Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets.*" And when they had done this, they enclosed a great shoal of fish; and as their nets were breaking, they beckoned to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. *But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."* For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the catch of fish which they had taken; and so also were James and John, sons of Zeb'edee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "*Do not be afraid; henceforth you will be catching men.*" *And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him.* (Luke 5:1-11)

#### **Spiritual Misunderstanding**

From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. *And Peter took him and began to rebuke him, saying, "God forbid, Lord! This shall never happen to you."* But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me; for you are not on the side of God, but of men." Then Jesus told his disciples, "*If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.*" (Matthew 16:21-25)

#### **Spiritual Consolation**

[Jesus] took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. And as he was praying, the appearance of his countenance was altered, and his raiment became dazzling white. And behold, two men talked with him, Moses and Eli'jah... *Now Peter and those who were with him were heavy with sleep, and when they wakened they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him.* And as the men were parting from him, Peter said to Jesus, "*Master, it is well that we are here; let us make three booths, one for you and one for Moses and one for Eli'jah*" -- *not knowing what he said...* (Luke 9:28-36)

#### **Spiritual Pride**

And Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away; for it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.' But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee." *Peter said to him, "Even though they all fall away, I will not."* And Jesus said to him, "Truly, I say to you, this very night, before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times." But he said vehemently, "*If I must die with you, I will not deny you.*" And they all said the same. (Mark 14:26-31)

### **Spiritual Weakness**

And they went to a place which was called Gethsem'ane; and he said to his disciples, "Sit here, while I pray." And he took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly distressed and troubled. And he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch." And going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him... *And he came and found them sleeping, and he said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not watch one hour? Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak..."* "And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to answer him. And he came the third time, and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? It is enough; the hour has come; the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand." (Mark 14:32-42)

## **2. The Fall and Restoration of Peter**

### **The Triple Denial of Peter**

While he was still speaking, there came a crowd, and the man called Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them... And when those who were about him saw what would follow, they said, "Lord, shall we strike with the sword?" And one of them struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his right ear. But Jesus said, "No more of this!" And he touched his ear and healed him... Then they seized him and led him away, bringing him into the high priest's house. *Peter followed at a distance; and when they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat among them.* Then a maid, seeing him as he sat in the light and gazing at him, said, "This man also was with him." But he denied it, saying, "Woman, I do not know him." And a little later some one else saw him and said, "You also are one of them." But Peter said, "Man, I am not." And after an interval of about an hour still another insisted, saying, "Certainly this man also was with him; for he is a Galilean." But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are saying." And immediately, while he was still speaking, the cock crowed. *And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said to him, "Before the cock crows today, you will deny me three times." And he went out and wept bitterly.* (Luke 22:47-62)

### **The Triple Reconciliation of Peter**

Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and so with the fish. This was now the third time that Jesus was revealed to the disciples after he was raised from the dead. When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me (Gk *agapao*) more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you (Gk *phileo*)." He said to him, "Feed my lambs." A second time he said to him, "Simon, son of John, do you love me (*agapao*)?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you (*phileo*)." He said to him, "Tend my sheep." He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me (*phileo*)?" Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me (*phileo*)?" And he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you (*phileo*)." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep." (John 21:15-17)

### 3. Peter the Evangelist

#### **Pentecost, the Holy Spirit, and the Transformation of Peter**

[After the ascension] they returned to Jerusalem... [and] they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James. *All these with one accord devoted themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus...* When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them. *And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance...*

*But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them, "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words... Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?" And Peter said to them, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children and to all that are far off, every one whom the Lord our God calls to him..." So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. (Acts 1:12-14, 2:14-42)*

#### **Peter's Boldness in Speaking about Christ**

*Many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to about five thousand. On the morrow their rulers and elders and scribes were gathered together in Jerusalem... And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, "By what power or by what name did you do this?" Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders, if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a cripple, by what means this man has been healed, be it known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by him this man is standing before you well... And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they wondered; and they recognized that they had been with Jesus. (Acts 4:1-13)*

#### **Peter's Ability to Rejoice in Suffering**

And when they had brought them [the apostles], they set them before the Sanhedrin. And the high priest questioned them, saying, "We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and you intend to bring this man's blood upon us." But Peter and the apostles answered, *"We must obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised Jesus whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior... And we are witnesses to these things..." [W]hen they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. And every day in the temple and at home they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ. (Acts 12:1-40-42)*

### **Jesus' Prophecy of Peter's Crucifixion**

...Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me (Gk *agapao*) more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you (Gk *phileo*)..." "[Jesus said to Peter] "*Amen, amen, I say to you, when you were young, you girded yourself and walked where you would; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish to go.*" *This he said to show by what death he was to glorify God.* (John 21:16, 18-19)

### **Peter's Final Act of Evangelization**

Simon Peter the son of John, from the village of Bethsaida in the province of Galilee, brother of Andrew the apostle, and himself chief of the apostles, after having been bishop of the church of Antioch and having preached to the Dispersion — the believers in circumcision, in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia— pushed on to Rome in the second year of Claudius to overthrow Simon Magus, and held the sacerdotal chair there for twenty-five years until the last, that is the fourteenth, year of Nero. *At his hands he received the crown of martyrdom being nailed to the cross with his head towards the ground and his feet raised on high, asserting that he was unworthy to be crucified in the same manner as his Lord.* (Jerome, *Lives of Illustrious Men*, 1)

## **4. Conclusion**

### **Pope Francis on the Holy Spirit, the Agent of Evangelization**

*Spirit-filled evangelizers means evangelizers fearlessly open to the working of the Holy Spirit.* At Pentecost, the Spirit made the apostles go forth from themselves and turned them into heralds of God's wondrous deeds, capable of speaking to each person in his or her own language. The Holy Spirit also grants the courage to proclaim the newness of the Gospel with boldness (*parrhesia*) in every time and place, even when it meets with opposition. Let us call upon him today, firmly rooted in prayer, for without prayer all our activity risks being fruitless and our message empty. Jesus wants evangelizers who proclaim the good news not only with words, but above all by a life transfigured by God's presence.... How I long to find the right words to stir up enthusiasm for a new chapter of evangelization full of fervor, joy, generosity, courage, boundless love and attraction! Yet I realize that no words of encouragement will be enough unless the fire of the Holy Spirit burns in our hearts. *A spirit-filled evangelization is one guided by the Holy Spirit, for he is the soul of the Church called to proclaim the Gospel.* Before offering some spiritual motivations and suggestions, I once more invoke the Holy Spirit. I implore him to come and renew the Church, to stir and impel her to go forth boldly to evangelize all peoples. (Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* no. 259, 261)

### **The Catechism on Confirmation, Pentecost, and the Sacrament of Evangelization**

*It is evident from its celebration that the effect of the sacrament of Confirmation is the special outpouring of the Holy Spirit as once granted to the apostles on the day of Pentecost...* It gives us a special strength of the Holy Spirit to spread and defend the faith by word and action as true witnesses of Christ, to confess the name of Christ boldly, and never to be ashamed of the Cross... This "character" perfects the common priesthood of the faithful, received in Baptism, and "the confirmed person receives the power to profess faith in Christ publicly and as it were officially (*quasi Ex officio*) (CCC 1302-03, 1305)