

# Devotions for August 29 – September 04, 2011

**Monday, August 29, 2011:** *Peter With Jesus* Daily reading: Matthew 4:18-22

Peter is an ordinary fisherman in Galilee, leading an ordinary life, when something quite out of the ordinary happens to him. He meets Jesus, a charismatic preacher from Nazareth, and it changes everything. Peter is apparently captivated by Jesus, by his words and his personality, because he leaves his nets and follows Jesus. His parents had named him Simon or Simeon, but Jesus gives him a new name: Peter, which means “rock.” This nickname is not too far from the modern name “Rocky,” and sends the same sort of message. Peter must be a straight-talking, no-nonsense man. These must have been the qualities that Jesus identifies in Peter, the one who would become part of his inner circle of disciples, and the one upon whom the church of the future will be built. Has your encounter with Jesus changed everything about you? Ask God to lead you into inner transformation after encountering this Jesus.

**Tuesday, August 30, 2011:** *Peter, the Man* Daily reading: Mark 1:16-20

Peter comes from Bethsaida, but he and his brother Andrew live in Capernaum and earn their living by fishing. They work with James and John. What sort of a man is Peter? You could say he’s human; in fact, very human, bearing the faults and failings we all share. He shows he can be willing to change his mind about his ideas; for instance, in his relations with the church of Antioch, he initially eats with Gentiles, and later refuses to do so. The Scriptures tell us that he can be harsh, and quick to anger. We also see him as a man of great loyalty, and deep love for Jesus. What personal attributes of yours could be used in the work of the Kingdom of God? Ask God to help you see your spiritual gifts and abilities more clearly.

**Wednesday, August 31, 2011:** *Peter, the Leader* Daily reading: Mark 8:29 and Luke 9:20

Peter is a leader. From the start, he seems to be the spokesman for the disciples, the man who stands out from the group. Peter is always listed first, and he’s often referred to as part of Jesus’ inner circle: Peter, James, and John. Peter is best known as the one who declares out loud, for the first time, that Jesus is the Messiah. “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God,” he says. We don’t know how much Peter understands about Jesus’ divine nature, but he declares it boldly just the same. At the Last Supper, he does not hesitate to confront Jesus. When Jesus says he will only accept as friends those whose feet he has washed, Peter tells him to wash not only his feet, but his hands and head, as well. Who is a leader that you respect and admire? Ask God to develop leadership qualities in you today.

**Thursday, September 1, 2011:** *Peter Denies Jesus* Daily reading: Matthew 26:75 and Mark 14:72

Jesus knows Peter will deny him, and tells him so, but Peter doesn’t believe it. He indignantly replies that, even if the other disciples desert Jesus, he will suffer death rather than disown his Lord. But when the moment comes, Peter does just as Jesus predicts. In the courtyard of the high priest, he denies ever knowing Jesus. Failure of courage? Probably. Who among us, in the face of danger, wouldn’t quickly deny what we’re accused of? This kind of thing has happened before; for example, when Peter walks on water but then sinks beneath the waves. As always, Peter realizes his failing and, in shame, weeps bitterly. Yet Peter continues to be a faithful follower of Jesus. In what ways do we deny Jesus each day? Ask God for the gift of courage to be a faithful follower of Jesus.

**Friday, September 2, 2011:** *Easter Morning* Daily reading: John 20:1-10

On Easter morning, Jesus appears to the women at the tomb. Peter is the first man to see Jesus that morning, and he emerges as the leader of a new group of Jesus-followers, the beginning of the church. Peter proclaims the risen Christ, and preaches for Pentecost, the church’s birthday. During the next 15 years, Peter leads this new church, giving shape to new ways of thinking about God’s influence in the world. Peter travels extensively, and wherever he goes, new churches emerge. Easter morning shapes Peter’s reality forever. Ask God to help you understand Easter morning more clearly.

**Saturday, September 3, 2011:** *Peter Dies* Daily reading: Matthew 16:13-20

Peter’s death is not noted in Scripture, but scholars agree it occurred around 60 A.D. After he was imprisoned by Herod Agrippa (not to be confused with Herod the Great, who was king when Jesus was born, or Herod Antipas, who reigned at the time of Jesus’ ministry), Peter leaves Jerusalem and travels to Rome. There is nothing written in Acts about his residence in Rome, but according to tradition he died there, martyred by Nero on an inverted cross after saying he was not worthy to die the way that Jesus had died. If you visit Rome, you will see a building that claims to be the prison home of Peter, and the tour guides will point you to a group of trees a hundred yards away where it’s believed that Peter was martyred. What do you find inspiring about Peter’s life? Ask God to deepen your faith life.

**Sunday, September 4, 2011:** *Worth Noting* Daily reading: Matthew 16:21-28

Peter, a young fisherman from Bethsaida, is an unlikely candidate to become the first pope of the Catholic Church, someone called a saint and iconized in sculpture and art. Jesus comes to know his strengths and weaknesses, and grows to love him, as well. Peter is possibly the most verbal, straightforward person in the Gospels. It is interesting that Peter is portrayed with great honesty in terms of doubts, failings, and lack of courage. Sound familiar? He’s just like us. He seems to be very honest and open, and speaks from the heart. He quickly assumes responsibility and leadership in the circles that follow Jesus, and often speaks on behalf of the group. He is present at the transfiguration of Jesus, and this possibly transforms his faith life forever. What have you learned about your own faith life from Peter? Ask God to use you in some new way today.