

# PETER

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CORNERSTONE OF CATHOLICISM

STUDY GUIDE

## SESSION 7



LECTIO™

UNVEILING SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION

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# SESSION 7

## DISCIPLESHIP AT A DISTANCE: PETER AND THE PASSION OF CHRIST



### OPENING PRAYER

*"[I]f when you do right and suffer for it you take it patiently, you have God's approval. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. He committed no sin; no guile was found on his lips. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he trusted to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls." —1 Peter 2:20b-25*

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God, thank you for this day and for all the gifts you have given us: love, mercy, grace, and our very lives. You are our hope, our joy, and our Redeemer. Help us to rejoice in the sufferings that we share with you, and to bear them with grace and peace. Send us your Spirit so that we may persevere in the midst of temptation and trial. Teach us to follow you and trust in you, through the intercession and example of your faithful disciple and the shepherd of your flock, St. Peter. We ask this in your name, and through the intercession of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary. Amen.

St. Peter, pray for us.

### INTRODUCTION

In our last session, Jesus began the journey that will take him from the northern town of Caesarea Philippi south to Jerusalem. On the way, Jesus allowed Peter, John, and James to witness his transfiguration—a revelation of his glory. Surely such an encounter with the living God would steel the faith of the Apostles for the future. Surely Peter's proclamation that Jesus was the Son of the Living God seemed validated by the triumphal entry into Jerusalem. The Apostles were following the right man. Their lives were filled with hope and promise. Jesus the Messiah would lead them to victory over their nation's oppressors.

But everything seemed to go wrong. And, very quickly, following Jesus meant more than miracles and triumph—it meant death. How closely could anyone follow a man into that nightmare? Would we?



# CONNECT

1. Share an experience of when a friend helped you through a difficult time. How did that person's presence help you? How would you have felt if you had gone through your trial alone?
2. Think of a time when you were traveling and got lost. What caused you to lose your way? How did you get back to where you should be? What steps did you take afterward to avoid losing your way again?



## WATCH VIDEO

*The following is a brief outline of the topics covered in the video teaching.*

### I. The Last Supper

- A. Disciples argue who is the greatest
- B. Jesus tells Simon Peter that he has prayed for him
  1. Luke 22:31-32
  2. Peter responds by proclaiming he will not fall away; Jesus responds again by prophesying Peter's denial

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### II. Garden of Gethsemane

("the place of the press")

- A. Place where Jesus often met with his disciples; early Christian tradition also mentions a cave

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## B. Jesus' prayer to his Father

(Mark 14:33-42)

1. Rebukes Simon Peter for being asleep
2. Tells disciples to "watch and pray"—the Passover a night of vigil and prayer (Exodus 12)

## C. Jesus betrayed at midnight, the hour the angel of death appears in the Passover story

1. Last Supper takes place from 6–9 p.m.
2. Prays in garden from 9–12 p.m.

## D. Jesus is the Paschal Lamb

## III. Luke's account of Peter's betrayal (Luke 22)

## A. "Peter followed at a distance"

(Luke 22:54)

1. Jesus taken across Kidron Valley to Caiaphas' house
2. Church built over Caiaphas' house; St. Peter Gallicantu

## B. Peter denies Jesus three times

1. Icon of Peter at charcoal fire, rooster at center
2. Icon of Peter, behind altar: Peter went out "and wept for love" (Luke 22:62; Vulgate)
3. Discipleship at a distance leads to denial
4. Peter is a model for us because he repents

## IV. Icon of John 21, St. Peter Gallicantu

## A. After the Resurrection, Jesus appears on the shore

1. Disciples have another miraculous catch of fish
2. Around charcoal fire, Peter affirms his love for Jesus three times
  - a. Jesus commissions Peter to be shepherd of his flock
  - b. Peter is a witness to the mercy and forgiveness that can be found in Jesus Christ

## B. Poem by Prudentius: "On the Wings of the Dawn"





# DISCUSS

1. On the Mount of Transfiguration, Jesus discussed his “exodus” with Moses and Elijah. How does the first Passover provide the backdrop for the Last Supper—and for the night of prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane?

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2. Compare Jesus’ prayer in the garden with that of the Apostles. Jesus comes out of the garden with his will united to that of the Father. The Apostles will soon scatter in fear. How is Jesus’ prayer a model for us in difficult situations?

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3. Peter “followed [Jesus] at a distance” and ended up denying Jesus. How can we avoid being disciples “at a distance”?

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4. At the cockcrow, “the Lord turned and looked at Peter” (Luke 22:61). What do you think was communicated in that look? How do we experience that look when our conscience convicts us of sin?

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5. How is Peter a model of repentance? At the Last Supper, Jesus had said to Peter, “but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail; and when you have turned again, strengthen your brethren” (Luke 22:32). How might remembering those words helped move Peter from despair to repentance? What must we do in our lives to turn back to Jesus and follow him more closely?



*St. Peter weeping for love; icon from St. Peter Gallicantu photo*  
© Augustine Institute

6. In John 21, why does Jesus ask Peter three times, “Do you love me?” What is the significance of the “charcoal fire” mentioned in this scene? What commission does Jesus give to Peter with each of his responses?

7. At the Last Supper, Peter proudly declares that he will never betray Jesus, but only hours later he denies Jesus three times. Later Peter will write, “Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for ‘God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble’” (1 Peter 5:5). How does Peter’s life inform his preaching?

*“Jesus not only expects to help us escape temptation but he also trusts us. This is a great strength, because ‘he always opens up new horizons’ while, through temptation, the devil ‘closes and develops environments which cause you to fight’ and ‘seek justification for accusing others.’*

*“Let us not be ensnared by temptation.’ You can only escape temptation through ‘listening to the Word of Jesus.’ ... ‘Let us ask the Lord to always say to us, in times of temptation, as he did with the disciples, with patience: Stop. Do not worry. Lift up your eyes, look to the horizon. Do not close yourself in, move forward.’ His Word will save us from falling into sin in moments of temptation.” —Pope Francis, Homily, February 18, 2014*

# MEMORY VERSE

*“And he said, ‘Abba, Father, all things are possible to you; remove this cup from me; yet not what I will, but what you will.’”*  
—Mark 14:36



## CLOSING PRAYER

Lord Jesus Christ: we adore you and thank you for the gifts of mercy you have given us. Help us to always follow you closely as your disciples, persevering in faith and turning back to you when we stumble and fall. Help us to follow the example of St. Peter’s humility, repentance, confidence, and love. Give us the grace to daily bear our cross, suffer well, and follow you. Nourishing us by your sacraments, keep us always close to you. Amen.

St. Peter, pray for us.

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## FOR FURTHER READING

Pope Francis, “Resist Temptation” (Morning Meditation in the Chapel of the *Domus Sanctae Marthae*), by *L’Osservatore Romano* (February 21, 2014)

Pope Benedict XVI, General Audience “On Jesus’ Prayer in the Garden of Olives at Gethsemane,” February 1, 2012  
*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1440–1460 (“The Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation”)

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Saint Peter, Mosaic in front of the church on the Mount of Beatitudes © Zvonimer Athletic/shutterstock.com



# COMMIT—DAY 1

## LAST SUPPER, FIRST COMMUNION



One of the greatest and most miraculous gifts Jesus gives us is his very self—his Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity—in the Most Holy Eucharist. Christ instituted the gift of this First Communion during the Last Supper, when he shared the Jewish Passover with his Apostles the night before his trial, suffering, and crucifixion.

The Passover is the backdrop for both the Eucharist and for Jesus' Passion. The first Passover is described in Exodus 12. Let's take a closer look. Read Exodus 12:1-14 and, as you read, answer the following questions:

In Exodus 12:5-6, what is to be sacrificed? \_\_\_\_\_

In Exodus 12:7, what was to be done with the blood? \_\_\_\_\_

In Exodus 12:8, what was to be done with the meat? \_\_\_\_\_

In Exodus 12:13, what did the blood do for Israel? \_\_\_\_\_

In Exodus 12:2-3, 14, how often was this feast to be celebrated? \_\_\_\_\_

In Exodus 12, Pharaoh and his kingdom are about to suffer the last plague upon Egypt, the death of the firstborn. In preparation, Israel is commanded to celebrate the first Passover meal according to God's specific directions. They are to take an unblemished lamb, sacrifice it, use its blood to identify their faithfulness by marking their doorposts, and then consume the flesh of the sacrifice. If, and only if, this was done, God's people would be spared the plague that was coming. Then they would be led out of the slavery and bondage they had suffered under for so long.

God's people faithfully celebrated the first Passover, and Moses led them out of Egypt. God instructed them to remember, every year thereafter, the mighty deeds of the Exodus during the Passover feast. Jesus and his Apostles faithfully celebrated that feast together during his earthly ministry. But the time had come to share a final Passover meal together. God was about to do something completely new through Jesus.



*Drawings by Gustave Dore © Nicku / shutterstock.com*

In John 1:29, how does John the Baptist identify Jesus? \_\_\_\_\_

How does St. Peter refer to Jesus in 1 Peter 1:19 and in 2:22? \_\_\_\_\_

Interestingly, the gospels don't make any mention of a lamb being consumed by Jesus and his Apostles at the Last Supper. Why? Because Jesus is the lamb of this new Passover, as John the Baptist pointed out, and it will be his flesh and blood that fulfills the Old Covenant feast in an unexpected way.

Jesus had prepared his Apostles for what he was about to institute. In John 6, during an earlier Passover celebration, Jesus multiplied five loaves of bread and two fish to feed 5,000 people. This miraculous provision for so many people, along with Jesus' words that day, recalled how God rained bread down from heaven for the people of Israel to eat as they wandered in the desert after their exodus from slavery in Egypt (see Exodus 16). Shortly after this miracle of the multiplication of the bread, Jesus makes one of the most radical declarations of his public ministry:

*"I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will live for ever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh."*  
—John 6:51



*Ancient mosaic inside the Church of the Multiplication of the Loaves and the Fishes, Tabgha, Israel © Doin Oakenhelm/shutterstock.com*

Some listeners were offended by Jesus' words.

Jesus responds, not by correcting a possible misunderstanding, but by repeating his words several times. Let's take a closer look at what Jesus says in the following verses. In the verse above (John 6:51), what is Jesus giving us to eat?

In John 6:53, what are we to do with Jesus' flesh and blood?

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In John 6:54, what are we to do with Jesus' flesh and blood? And what does this bring us?

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In John 6:55, what are Jesus' flesh and blood?

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In John 6:56, what are we to do with Jesus' flesh and blood? And what does this bring us?

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In John 6:57, what are we to do to Jesus? And what does this bring us?

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Not once, not twice, but *six* different times Jesus states that we are to consume his flesh and blood so we may abide in him and have eternal life. Such repetition makes the intention of Jesus' words very clear, though that clarity of meaning was difficult for the crowd to hear. St. John recounts how that day many of Jesus' disciples stopped following him (see John 6:66). Jesus then turned to the Twelve Apostles and asked, "Do you also wish to go away?" Here Peter once again speaks for the Twelve:

*"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life; and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God." —John 6:68-69*

Peter may have spoken rashly at times, but when the topic was Jesus and his identity, Peter was given a special grace and clarity to see and proclaim Jesus as the Christ.

Having revealed himself as the Bread of Life and established the miraculous nature of his flesh and blood, Jesus has prepared his Apostles for his declaration at the Last Supper. "I have earnestly desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer," he tells them (Luke 22:15). The Last Supper is clearly a participation in the Old Covenant Passover meal, but it is also a climactic new moment in salvation history.

The words Jesus was about to speak are unique, and they signal that what he described in John 6 is now to be given:

*"And he took bread, and when he had given thanks [Greek, eucharistēsas] he broke it and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' And likewise the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.'" —Luke 22:19-20*



Jesus is the Paschal Lamb and the living bread from heaven, who offers himself willingly as a sacrifice for our sins. In the Exodus, the sign of the lamb's blood on the doorposts protected the Israelites from death and freed them from slavery in Egypt. Now it is by the blood of the Lamb of God, Jesus, that we are freed from sin and death. As St. Peter so beautifully says, we have been ransomed "with the precious blood of Christ" (1 Peter 1:19). We should also remember how, after Israel's departure from Egypt, God fed his people with bread from heaven as they journeyed to the Promised Land. In the Sacrament of the Eucharist, Jesus nourishes us with his own Body and Blood as we journey to the Promised Land of heaven.

At the Last Supper, Jesus tells these first priests of the New Covenant, "Do this in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19). Peter and the Apostles are given the charge to "do this," and in return Jesus promises to give us his Body and Blood as nourishment for their (and our) journey. Of the Eucharist, the *Catechism* says:

*"[W]e know ourselves to be bound by the command the Lord gave on the eve of his Passion: 'Do this in remembrance of me.' We carry out this command of the Lord by celebrating the memorial of his sacrifice. In so doing, we offer to the Father what he has himself given us: the gifts of his creation, bread and wine which, by the power of the Holy Spirit and by the words of Christ, have become the body and blood of Christ. Christ is thus really and mysteriously made present."*—CCC 1356–1357

At the hands of Peter and the Apostles, we truly receive the bread of angels (see Psalm 78:25).

For a more in-depth look at the Sacrament of the Eucharist, and to learn more about the scriptural roots of the Eucharist and the Mass, see the *LECTIO* study titled "*Eucharist: Discovering the Mass in the Bible*," by Dr. Brant Pitre.



*The Last Supper* © Zvonimir Athletic / Shutterstock.com

# COMMIT—DAY 2

## WATCH AND PRAY



Though the Gospels do not give a specific location for the Last Supper, they do tell us that Jesus and the Apostles celebrated the Passover in an “upper room” inside the city (see Matthew 26:17-18, Luke 22:8-13, Mark 14:13-16). After finishing the meal, Jesus and his Apostles depart, singing hymns of the Passover feast (see Matthew 26:30). According to the following passage, where do they go?

Luke 22:39 \_\_\_\_\_

At the bottom of the Mount of Olives is a cave, which, to this day, is venerated as the place where Jesus and his Apostles met—“as was his custom” (according to St. Luke). St. John affirms that “Jesus often met there with his disciples” (John 18:2). This may seem like an odd location for a well-known rabbi and teacher to use as his lodgings. But the events leading up to the Last Supper will shed some light on that location. Look up the following passages. What is happening in each?

Matthew 21:1-9 \_\_\_\_\_

Matthew 21:10-13 \_\_\_\_\_

Matthew 21:23-45 \_\_\_\_\_

Matthew 23:1-39 \_\_\_\_\_

Matthew 21:45-46 and 26:3-4 \_\_\_\_\_

With the chief priests, Pharisees, and elders seeking to arrest and kill Jesus, staying in the heart of the city is no longer a safe option. Instead, Jesus chooses a location outside the city that can be accessed in the shadow of the nearby valley. A cave on the Mount of Olives would provide protection for Jesus and his Apostles from those trying to arrest him. The Gospels detail Jesus’ next moves following Jesus and the Apostles’ arrival at this familiar place. In Luke 22:40-41, where does Jesus go once they arrive at “the place”?

\_\_\_\_\_

In Matthew 26:36-37, who does Jesus take with him? \_\_\_\_\_

The three disciples who had seen Jesus transfigured on the Mount of Transfiguration now withdraw “about a stone’s throw” away from Jesus along the Mount of Olives. But here Jesus’ countenance is not changed to a dazzling white. Instead, Jesus sweats blood as he prays to do the Father’s will. Pope Benedict XVI, reflecting on Jesus’ invitation for Peter, John, and James to join Jesus in prayer, says:

*“Yet, although Jesus arrives ‘alone’ at the place in which he was to stop and pray, he wants at least three disciples to be near him, to be in closer relationship with him. This is a spacial closeness, a plea for solidarity at the moment in which he feels death approaching, but above all it is a closeness in prayer, in a certain way to express harmony with him at the moment when he is preparing to do the Father’s will to the very end; and it is an invitation to every disciple to follow him on the Way of the Cross.” —Pope Benedict XVI*



Jesus returns to find his disciples sleeping and tells them, "Watch and pray" (see Matthew 26:41). These words bring us back to the Exodus.

What does Exodus 12:42 call the night of the first Passover? \_\_\_\_\_

What does Exodus 12:12, 23 tell us is the reason for watching? \_\_\_\_\_

On the night of the first Passover, God's people celebrated the feast and then watched, ready to depart. It was a night of watchful prayer as they trusted in God's promise. Death would pass over them. Israel, described as God's firstborn son in Exodus 4:22, is spared by the blood of the lamb on their doorposts. Every year after that first Passover in Egypt, Israel was "to observe this rite as an ordinance" (Exodus 12:24)—to remember the night of watching and "the sacrifice of the LORD's Passover" (Exodus 12:27).

Having celebrated the Passover meal, Jesus calls his disciples to join in the watchful prayer of Passover evening. Like Israel before him, Jesus prays that death would pass over him, if it is the Father's will. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prays several times saying,

*"Abba, Father; all things are possible to you; remove this cup from me; yet not what I will, but what you will."*—Mark 14:36

Benedict XVI explains this request saying:

*"Jesus then asks the Father, if this be possible, to obtain that this hour pass from him. It is not only man's fear and anguish in the face of death [that cause him to ask for this], but is the devastation of the Son of God who perceives the terrible mass of evil that he must take upon himself to overcome it, to deprive it of power."*—Pope Benedict XVI

Jesus in his humanity is not merely suffering in the garden at the thought of the pain and death that await him, but he is overwhelmed—sweating blood—because he also takes upon himself the sins of humanity, from the beginning to the end of time. Jesus is the Lamb who offers himself sacrificially for our salvation. The Father hears the prayer of his Son as the Son submits to his Father's will.

Just as Jesus had invited Peter, James, and John to "watch and pray" on the eve of the Last Supper, so too does his Church invite us to watch and pray each Holy Thursday evening. After Holy Thursday liturgy, the Blessed Sacrament is reserved on a special altar of repose, and the faithful are encouraged to spend time in prayer and adoration. There we can respond to Jesus' invitation to follow on the Way of the Cross. We can imagine ourselves in the garden with Jesus and his three closest companions. We can watch and learn from Our Lord how to conform ourselves to the Father's will. The Letter to the Hebrews tells us:

*"In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard for his godly fear. Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; and being made perfect he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him."*—Hebrews 5:7-9

Let us join Jesus often in the garden—and when we would be tempted to turn away from God's will, "Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16).

# COMMIT—DAY 3

## MOUNT OF OLIVES TO CAIAPHAS' HOUSE



The ancient city of Jerusalem is situated on the southern end of a plateau and surrounded on three sides by steep valleys. The Valley of Gehenna (also called Valley of Hinnom) runs along the west and south sides of the city. The Kidron Valley sits along the east side of the city, dividing the Temple Mount from the Mount of Olives. The 31-acre Temple Mount, with its vertical walls, formed the southeast corner of the ancient city, with the city itself wrapping around the southwest, west, and northern sides of the Temple.



*Jerusalem landscape - view of the Old City*  
© gkatz/shutterstock.com

The Mount of Olives takes its name from the many olive trees that covered much of its slope (some remain to this day). The Garden of Gethsemane is at the bottom of the Mount of Olives, where it meets the Kidron Valley. *Gethsemane* means “the place of the press,” so named because of the olives and oil produced there.



*Church of All Nations and Mount of Olives, Jerusalem, Israel* © gumbao/shutterstock.com

The Mount of Olives affords a spectacular view of the Old City of Jerusalem, the eastern wall of the 31-acre Temple Mount complex, and the stunning Temple that once stood at its center. The Temple’s white stone would have shone in the sun’s light and made a stunning sight for travelers approaching from this direction.



*Dome of the Rock in beautiful panorama of Jerusalem from Mount of Olives* © OPIS zagrab / shutterstock.com

Jesus and his Apostles descended the southern edge of the Mount of Olives as Jesus made his triumphal entry into Jerusalem. As the full panorama of the city and its Temple came into view, Jesus momentarily stopped partway down the hill, moved with pity by the hard-heartedness of God’s people who inhabited it.

*“And when he drew near and saw the city he wept over it, saying, ‘Would that even today you knew the things that make for peace! But now they are hid from your eyes.’”*

—Luke 19:41-42

Jesus knew the people, having rejected the peace only he could give, would eventually suffer the ravages of war and destruction by the hand of the Romans.



*Steps to the Transfiguration photo*  
© Augustine Institute

After finishing their Passover meal, Jesus and the Apostles journey to the Mount of Olives, making their way a short distance up the Kidron Valley. Ancient stairs have been excavated near the city that would almost certainly have been used by Jesus and his disciples as they made their way down from the city to the valley. These stairs also pass close by the site of the house of the High Priest Caiaphas.

From their gathering place in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus goes a further distance to pray. Returning to his disciples he announces, "...the hour is at hand..." (see Matthew 26:45). According to Exodus 12:29, at what hour is judgment executed on Egypt?

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At midnight Judas takes the role of the angel of death of old, and comes to the familiar meeting place of Jesus and his Apostles. Instead of joining his companions in prayer and watching, he has arrived with another purpose. Judas greets Jesus with a kiss and betrays him to the crowd and officers of the temple. With lanterns, torches, clubs, and swords in hand, the officers seize Jesus, bind him, and lead him to Caiaphas, the high priest. According to Mark 14:50, what do the disciples do?

Mark 14:50 \_\_\_\_\_



The Last Supper, a covenant celebration that brings together Jesus and his closest friends, now ends—a few hours later in a place of prayer—with betrayal. The Apostles flee in fear. Jesus, brutally treated, now climbs the steps he had descended earlier. Two beautiful reliefs hang near these steps in Jerusalem and recount these two journeys, one in the company of friends and one in the company of the guards.



*Reliefs photo* © Augustine Institute

These two reliefs provide a visual witness to the consequences of the disciples' inability to watch even one hour with Jesus in the garden. Jesus is able to courageously face the suffering to come because of his time of watchfulness and prayer with the Father. The disciples, on the other hand, fearfully scatter, leaving Jesus alone. Later St. Peter will speak of fear and suffering: "But even if you do suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts reverence Christ as Lord..." (1 Peter 3:14-15).



# COMMIT—DAY 4

## FOLLOWING AT A DISTANCE



At the house of Caiaphas, the high priest, the scribes and elders have gathered to put Jesus on trial. What kind of testimony is acquired in the following passages?

Matthew 26:59-60 \_\_\_\_\_

Mark 14:55-56 \_\_\_\_\_

After having fled the Garden of Gethsemane, Peter eventually returns to the city. Not able to enter the high priest's house, he attempts to watch the proceedings from the courtyard. The weather on this cold spring night has chilled Peter to the bone, so he approaches a charcoal fire in the courtyard. There, in the light of the fire, Peter undergoes his own trial.

In Luke 22:56-60, the high priest's maid and others put what charges to Peter?

\_\_\_\_\_

And what are Peter's responses?

\_\_\_\_\_

Peter's denials cut to the heart: "I do not know him." Peter has been Jesus' closest disciple for the past three years. Jesus has stayed in Peter's home, making it the headquarters of his ministry in Galilee. Jesus has healed Peter's mother-in-law of sickness. Jesus has taught the masses from Peter's boat. At Jesus' command Peter has hauled in an abundance of fish that nearly threatened to break his nets. Jesus allowed Peter to defy nature itself and walk on water. Jesus gave Peter a view of eternity and glory at the Transfiguration. Jesus chose Peter to be the rock on which the Church would be built. All this Jesus did. But, still, Peter could only say, "I do not know him."

How could Peter respond in this way? As Dr. Gray explains in his teaching, Peter's denial can be traced back to one key statement: "Peter followed [Jesus] at a distance" (Matthew 26:58). The hard truth is that no one can live their discipleship at a distance. If we follow Christ in a discipleship that is easy, comfortable, and distant, we set ourselves up for a denial of the one we claim to follow. Faith becomes fragile, disposable, and easily abandoned at the slightest threat. This is what happens to Peter. Only hours after declaring that he would never fall away or desert Jesus, Peter puts himself on the sidelines. Having forfeited prayer for sleep, he also forfeits suffering with his Master for a safe place by a courtyard fire. Three times he denies knowing Jesus. We are capable of the same. Perhaps we do it every day in our words and actions.

By his third denial, Peter becomes more emphatic, even to the point of cursing and swearing (see Matthew 26:74). At this moment, *immediately*, as St. Luke records in his gospel, the cock crows. Peter knows the sound. He remembers then what Jesus said. He looks up to see Jesus turn toward him.

By now, Jesus' face has been marred by those who "spat" on it "and struck him; and... slapped him." Their eyes meet.

St. Matthew records Peter's response: "And he went out and wept bitterly" (Matthew 26:75). Bitter weeping is not the same as despair. While Peter's overwhelming guilt and shame will lead him to repentance, another disciple will fall into a great darkness of despair. Judas will kill himself that night, a self-centered end to a self-centered man. But somewhere in the midst of Peter's tears, the love and forgiveness he had seen so many times in the ministry of his Master will give him hope.

If we want to live as Jesus' disciples, we must remain close to him every day of our lives. But how can we follow Jesus in that way? What practical steps can we take to achieve this goal, in the midst of our very full (and often hectic) schedules and responsibilities?

Look at your schedule for the coming week, and think of at least one small thing you can do every day to be close to Jesus. It could be as small as a short prayer at work or at home, or a visit to an adoration chapel. It could be as large as sacrificing some item of food or comfort, or taking time out of your day to attend Mass. The sample "prayer schedule" below may provide help and inspiration. A blank schedule is provided to help you find times and ways you can strive to be closer to Jesus every day.

Day	To Do	Minutes
Monday	Wake up 15 minutes early to read and reflect on a passage from Sacred Scripture before work or school	15 minutes
Tuesday	Read through a COMMIT day from your <i>LECTIO</i> study this week; share your reflections with a friend	15 minutes
Wednesday	Go to daily Mass, or find a few minutes to visit an adoration chapel near your work or home	30–60 minutes
Thursday	Pray the rosary (or one decade of the rosary, if short on time)	15 minutes
Friday	Fast from meat today; set an alarm for 3:00 p.m. to thank Jesus for dying for our sins, or to pray a Divine Mercy chaplet	5–10 minutes
Saturday	Find traditional hymns or praise and worship music to listen to in the car while running errands or traveling to and from sports activities or events for the day	10–20 minutes
Sunday	Attend and participate in Holy Mass; celebrate the Lord's Day by having a nice meal or sharing a treat with your family	60 minutes



**My schedule:****Monday –**

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**Tuesday –**

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**Wednesday –**

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**Thursday –**

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**Friday –**

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**Saturday –**

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**Sunday – Attend and participate in Holy Mass**

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# COMMIT—DAY 5

## TRUTH AND BEAUTY

### Icons of St. Peter, Church of St. Peter Gallicantu, Jerusalem, Israel



*St. Peter Gallicantu Church photo © Augustine Institute*

The Church of St. Peter Gallicantu is located on the southwest edge of the Old City of Jerusalem. It was built over the ruins of the home of Caiaphas, the Jewish high priest. The very name of the church, Gallicantu, is Latin for “rooster,” seizing upon the image of Peter’s betrayal. The church’s lower level chapel contains three vibrant icons that tell of Jesus’ arrest and trial and the role of Peter on that infamous night of betrayal.

The first icon displays a group of figures in the background encircling a fire. Peter is located in the lower right-hand side of the group, with his arms outstretched in a gesture of denial. He faces the high priest’s maidservant who, in the scriptural account, provokes Peter’s betrayal. She has recognized his face in the light of the fire, proclaiming, “This man also was with him” (Luke 22:56). Peter replies, “Woman, I do not know him” (Luke 22:57). Thus, in the light of the fire, Peter denies the One who is the Light of the world. There will be no darker moment in Peter’s life.

The icon highlights Peter’s denial by placing a rooster high upon a pillar, towering above the fireside fiasco and recalling Jesus’ earlier prediction made at the Last Supper. Jesus had foretold Peter’s fall with the sign of the rooster’s crow: “I tell you, Peter, the cock will not crow this day, until you three times deny that you know me” (Luke 22:34). Thus the artist places the rooster as witness over the betrayal scene.

The betrayal is at the center of the icon’s space and story. Peter denies he even knows who Jesus is, not under arrest and interrogation before the high priest, but by the simple inquiry of one of the high priest’s lowliest of servants. Perhaps Peter’s use of the title “woman” in Luke’s account is intended to evoke the title Adam gave to Eve, who helped precipitate the fall of Adam. If this is true, Peter here participates in his own dramatic fall from grace, playing out the fall of Adam all over again.

The artist places Peter and Jesus in the forefront of the icon, framing the background scene of questioning and denial. At the moment the cock crows, Jesus turns and looks directly at Peter. The artist beautifully portrays Jesus' gaze at Peter, and Peter's look into the face of Christ. It's worth noting how the artist uses the position of Jesus' and Peter's hands to subtly show the state in which each man is found. Peter's hands seem to be pushing Jesus away—iconographically representing his denial. Jesus' hands are bound, as he is shown in his vulnerable captivity.

The Latin inscription below the icon reads, *non novi illum*, the words of Peter's denial, "I do not know him." Now the words of the maidservant strike hard, for she identified that Peter "was with him." Indeed, Peter had been with Jesus, all through the dinner and the agony in the garden. But the arrest undid it all. "Peter followed at a distance" (Luke 22:54). Thus, the description by the woman that Peter "was with him" serves to underscore the harsh truth that, now, Peter is no longer with Jesus.



*St. Peter weeping for love; icon from St. Peter Gallicantu photo © Augustine Institute*

The second icon shows Peter weeping in a cave. Luke tells us that as the rooster crows and as Peter sees Jesus, he remembers Jesus' words about his denial. "He went out and wept bitterly" (Luke 22:62) in response. The scriptural accounts do not tell us to where he ran. But the artist creatively suggests a cave. Why picture Peter in a cave? Does this evoke the darkness and bitterness of betraying a loved one?

The artist, aware of the Holy Land and its traditions, is likely suggesting that Peter goes back to the cave in the Garden of Gethsemane. Fourth-century pilgrims called it the Cave of Betrayal, and the cave is kept under the custody of the Franciscans, to this day. This was the place Jesus would often stay with his disciples (see John 18:2). It was home to them, but no longer. This was where Judas led the soldiers to arrest Jesus. And so Peter returns, like a sullen son of Adam, and weeps in the garden. That this icon stands so clearly behind the altar, where the liturgy remembers what Jesus did on the "night he was betrayed," reinforces that every Mass is a remembrance of how each of us, from Adam to Peter to the present day, have betrayed Love. And yet, every Mass shows that Jesus' offering at the Last Supper atones for our betrayal of him: "...drink of it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Matthew 26:27-28).





*St. Peter Gallicantu Church photo © Augustine Institute*

The third icon, like the first, captures two scenes that follow closely upon each other. In the background, Peter is fishing with several Apostles shortly after the death and resurrection of Jesus. Jesus is on the shore and, unrecognized by the disciples, suggests they cast the nets on the right side of the boat. They obey and catch a great haul of fish, filling the nets. When Peter hears that it is the Lord, he leaps overboard and swims ashore to a waiting fire. In the Gospel of John there are only two mentions of a charcoal fire: the first at Peter's betrayal of Jesus and the second in the scene on the shore by the Sea of Galilee. In the foreground of the icon the artist depicts Peter looking at Jesus over that fire, recalling the first icon where Peter had betrayed Jesus by the courtyard fire. In John's account, Jesus asks Peter three times if he loves him. Peter responds three times, each more emphatic than the first. Peter's story has come full circle. Affirming his love three times reverses Peter's threefold denial. In the icon, Jesus is seen reaching out his shepherd's staff to Peter, entrusting him with the leadership of the Church. No longer are Peter's hands pushing Jesus away, but they are now outstretched to receive Jesus' gift. Henceforth, Peter will be fishing for men, sharing the good news he himself has experienced firsthand. In Jesus there is forgiveness of sins.

## SESSION 7

## DISCIPLESHIP AT A DISTANCE: PETER'S AND THE PASSION OF CHRIST

Take a moment to journal your ideas, questions, or insights about this lesson. Write down thoughts you had that may not have been mentioned here. List any personal applications you got from the lessons. What challenged you the most in the teachings? How might you turn what you've learned into specific action?

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## SESSION 7

DISCIPLESHIP AT A DISTANCE: PETER'S AND THE PASSION OF CHRIST

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