The Life of St. Peter the Apostle

Objective:

To learn more about the life of St Peter and to learn from his errors and imitate his righteousness.

Memory Verse:

"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" (Matthew 16:18).

References:

• The life of Peter the apostle -By F. B. Meyer translated by Fr. Marcos Daoud.

• John 13 - 21

Lesson Outline:

I. The word "Apostle"

This title was given to the twelve disciples and those who were sent to the Jews in the dispersion after the destruction of Jerusalem to talk to them about Christianity. Their task necessitated movement from place to place to preach. They established churches, ordained ministers to them, and then moved on to other places.

II. Who is Peter?

St Peter was a fisherman who had a brother named Andrew. He was married, and probably had children (although this is not written anywhere), and it was his mother in law who Jesus healed as we read in the eleventh hour prayer.

He was one of the two disciples who went to prepare the last Passover and was one of the three who witnessed raising Jairus' daughter after her death. He was with Christ when the Transfiguration took place on the Mountain. of Tabor. He was with Christ in Gethsemane. He was one of the four disciples who heard Christ's prophecy about the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. He is the only disciple to walk on water.

III. Peter's Characteristics

St. Peter's love for his master Lord Jesus was deep and great. He was characterized by his inflamed zeal but he was rash. He was the first to confess the divinity of Christ, and the first to preach about Christ on the day of the Pentecost but his impulsiveness caused him to try to prevent Christ's death on the cross. So when Jesus was arrested Peter took out his sword to defend Christ and prevent the soldiers from taking Him. Peter then was in need of a bitter temptation to shake him and to make him know his weakness. As Jesus predicted "Assuredly, I say to you that this night, before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times" (Matthew 26:34). St. Peter denied His master but as soon as he heard the rooster crows he realized his mistake and cried bitterly in repentance. So after the Resurrection, he met the Lord Jesus at Lake Tiberias. The Lord Jesus asked him three times "Do you love me?" as Peter denied

him three times. Thus Jesus brought him back to his apostolic order when he said to him, "Feed My lambs...tend My sheep...feed My sheep" (John 21:15-17).

St. Peter was an ordinary man who had his good virtues as well as his mistakes and weaknesses. When his simple personality was met by Jesus Christ, it was changed into a great and glorious character whose effect extended to all the subsequent generations.

The call of the New Master reached him, that master who went through the cities and villages of Israel teaching, preaching and healing. Peter left everything and followed Him. He lived with Jesus in a life of discipleship. He ate and drank with Him. He accompanied Him in the wilderness and on the mountain, on land and on water. He saw His miracles and His glorious deeds. He listened to the words of the everlasting life that came out of His mouth. He listened to His prayers and felt the life of holiness, righteousness and the Divine perfection in Him. He has also seen Jesus' love and kindness, mercy and long suffering, endurance and patience, frankness and courage. Then, he accompanied Jesus to Gethsemane, saw him after He rose in triumph over death and sin and finally watched Him as He ascended into heaven.

The Bible relates St. Peter's life in its early age with its great power after the Ascension of Christ and the pouring of the Holy Spirit. St. Peter changed from a fisherman to a fisher of men. His life flourished with the light of knowledge and the love of God. He devoted all his life to service and spreading the message he received from the Lord Jesus, the Lord granted him the gift of performing miracles.

The study of St. Peter's personality explains how grace operates in the souls of people and the work of the grace of the Holy Spirit poured in our hearts is not hindered by the weakness of our human nature but through the work of God Almighty in us. This makes us always look forward to the power of Christ and the power of His blood that is able to turn the wicked to the life of piety and to destroy all the bonds that hinder the soul to enjoy the holy life through the Lord.

Studying the life of St. Peter the apostle and understanding the work of the Holy Spirit in him teaches us not to despise anyone, or look down upon anyone whatever his human weakness. So long as this man seeks earnestly and consciously to glorify the name of God and to spread His Kingdom, and does not seek glory for himself.

We trust that the Lord will work in us, operating wonderful deeds, revealing to the world, through us, the power of His Holy Spirit and saving us at the same time.

IV. Situations in the life of Peter the apostle

A. Lord Jesus helps St. Peter catching a great number of fish (Luke 5:1-8)

Let us examine St. Peter's attitude towards the Lord when he was in his boat. The Lord sent them to the depth and asked them to let down their nets after they had toiled all night. The Lord was glorified and they caught a great amount of fish. St. Peter said to Him, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man". He confessed his weakness when he realized that the Lord was the cause of the miracle. St. Peter also expressed his unworthiness with humility.

B. St. Peter walking on the Sea (Matthew 22-33)

St. Peter asked to go to the Lord on the water. Jesus granted him his wish. However, instead of keeping his eyes on the Lord he started looking around him and noticed the fierce wind, lost faith and started to sink. This is our problem, we think of the problem in the deep without realizing that the Lord is right there besides us helping us as long as we ask.

C. Lord Jesus tells His death and resurrection (Matthew 16:21-27)

When St. Peter, full of zeal, heard Lord Jesus talking about His death and resurrection, not realizing the importance of His crucifixion, he tried to hamper God's plan saying "Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!" When the lord replied, ..."get behind be satan," he was not referring to St Peter, but to what St Peter had said.

D. At the time of the Last Supper

"Even if I should have to die with you." St. Peter was hasty and rash but the Lord turns our hastiness and rashness into a powerful return to a powerful repentance, and the fruit of salvation to humanity (He did not realize his human potentialities).

How soon did he deny Christ and how soon did he return but this necessitated that he should go outside and weeps bitterly. St. Peter returned with power greater than weakness and this is what we need "Repentance".

E. At the time of the arrest and crucifixion

St. Peter was the only disciple to step up and defend the Lord. Many a time we criticize how he denied the lord but rarely do we see his great courage to stand before a group of soldiers and actually be the one to attack first striking the High Priest's slave with his sword. Although the act was condoned by the lord, we see that St Peter was truly courageous in defending his Lord.

F. Lord Jesus' attitude towards St Peter

To God, the heart is invaluable. When Lord Jesus met St. Peter after his denial, He did not punish him for his actions or reproach and reprove him but He said to him three times, "Do you love me?" What the Lord wants of us is only love him whatever our mistakes may be. He said it to him three times, as St. Peter denied him three times The Lord does not look at weaknesses and their consequences but He looks at the earnest love in the heart.

St. Peter endured his responsibility and cared for the sheep. He fed Lord Jesus' lambs through preaching and teaching about salvation that was ready to go wherever he was required, even to the gentiles such as Cornelius.

St. Peter preached and bore good witness to the Lord even to death.

V. His Service

St. Peter began his service among Jews of his race in Judea, Galilee and Samaria. The Lord was glorified through so many miracles performed by St. Peter such as healing the lame man at the Beautiful Gate. He healed Aeneas in Lydda. He brought Tabitha back to life after her death in Joppa. The Lord opened the door of faith for the Gentiles at St. Peter's hands through Cornelius, the Centurion. Yet, his main field of work was to preach to the Jews (Galatians 2:7-9). He preached in Antioch and toured the countries of Pontus, Galatia, Bithynia and some countries in Asia Minor to whom he directed his first epistle.

He was at one stage imprisoned by Herod, and was sentenced to be killed the following day. However the other disciples and apostles prayed on his behalf and an angel of the Lord was sent to release him. It says in the book of Acts that the angel had to wake him, showing that St Peter was no afraid to die was at in such peace that he could even sleep in a jail, with chains on his hands and feet and even when the angels bright light appeared he did not awaken but the angel had to wake him up.

VI. His Martyrdom

It is well known that St. Peter's life ended in Rome where he was condemned to death. He was crucified at the time of Nero the tyrant after July 64.

When he was sentenced to be crucified, he refused crucifixion at first due to his humility and not wanting to die as his Lord, however, the Lord appeared to him and said, "I will be crucified for you." This was to strengthen his faith. St. Peter decided to die for the Lord Jesus, and was crucified upside down.

V. His writings

His first epistle and the second epistle were sent to the Christians of Asia Minor towards the end of his life.

He is one of the most useful role models for young people for his great zeal, courage and repentance.

He revealed to us that the Lord does not treat us according to our weaknesses so long as we confess them, but He treats us according to our attitude and our true and honest love for Him.

In John 13 the Lord revealed to us the mystery of true purity, which means trusting Him and hope without despair when St. Peter was considered pure and Judas was not pure "you are clean, but not all of you". For He knew who would betray Him; therefore He said, "You are not all clean." (John 13:10) Peter was really the apostle of hope. He was filled with despair after the crucifixion and resurrection and accompanied the disciples to the lake to catch fish but he Lord looked at his longing and loving heart and his earnest desire and went to him at Lake Tiberias. (John 21) and gave him abundance of fish after he had spent all the night without catching any fish.

He is the apostle of hope because while being hasty and weak, he represents our case but after having the grace of the Holy Spirit and the power of Christ, he bore witness before the Society, the Congregation and the Jews.

(Some young people refrain from the service because of their weakness but we hope that they will concentrate on this point to give hope to the audience).

Peter the apostle represents every one of us. Christ works and is ready to work with us all the time as He worked with him.

Peter the apostle - after gaining experience - writes in his epistle, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Pet 1:3) "How beautiful is this living hope when we stick to it.

Glory be to God Forever. Amen.