

## The Confession of Saint Peter the Apostle

18 January

Holy Day

Today we commemorate the confession of Simon Peter as told in the Gospel according to Matthew. When Jesus asked, "Who do you say that I am?" Simon spoke up and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God!" Jesus then responded: "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! It was not flesh and blood that revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church."

In telling this story, the evangelist showed that every confession of Jesus as "the Christ, the Son of the living God," is always a gift from God. It is not something that human beings can discover by their own powers, nor is it a truth obvious to anyone who looks at the historical Jesus without the help of the Holy Spirit. The natural power of sight needs to be fulfilled by God's merciful gift of insight.

Today's feast was instituted by the Episcopal Church of the United States to complement the feast of the Conversion of Saint Paul on January twenty-fifth. Together these two feasts provide a suitable beginning and end for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, which all Churches now observe at this time of year. As Paul's conversion reminds Christians that they are united in a call to proclaim Jesus among the nations, so Peter's confession reminds Christians that they are united in the basis of this mission, which is the inspired knowledge of Jesus Christ, "the Son of the living God."

*See Readings, page 413.*

### Sentence

Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. *Matthew 16.16*

### Collect

Almighty God,  
you inspired Simon Peter, first among the apostles,  
to confess Jesus as Messiah and Son of the living God.  
Keep your Church steadfast upon the rock of this faith,  
so that in unity and peace  
we may proclaim the one truth  
and follow the one Lord,  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.

### Readings

Acts 4.8-13 *or* 1 Peter 5.1-4 Psalm 23

*Refrain* The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not be in want. *Or CR 4*  
*Matthew 16.13-19*

### Prayer over the Gifts

Living God,  
accept the offering of your holy Church.  
As Peter confessed Jesus, the Messiah and your Son,  
give us courage to follow him,  
the Lord who reigns with you for ever.

### *Preface of Apostles*

### Prayer after Communion

Keep us, Father, in this fellowship of faith,  
the Church of your Son Jesus Christ,  
and help us to confess him as Messiah and Lord  
in all we say and do.  
We ask this in his name.