



## PETER, APOSTLE AND POPE

Peter is presented as both pope and martyr. Standing in highly ornamental papal garb, he holds a cruciform staff in his left hand and, in his right, the “keys to the Kingdom.” Peter’s keys are among the most clearly articulated attributes of the Apostles as depicted during the Early Christian era.

St. Peter, a symbol of the authority of the Catholic teaching, is a common figure in sculptural and glazing programs. The special relationship of the Society of Jesus with the papacy undoubtedly encouraged the inclusion of Peter in a place of honor, immediately following the “signature” image of Mary Queen of Martyrs. As described in the entry for the window of Ignatius Loyola, the Jesuits’ vow of obedience was structured to allow them to respond directly to papal initiatives. This, in addition to its early dedication to humanistic education, made the Society a favorite resource for diplomatic, educational and missionary projects deemed important by the Holy See.

Peter, like other subjects of the chapel’s stained glass program, is a complex figure. Although clearly a figure of authority and power, and selected by Christ as leader of the Apostles, he is also a model of the penitent. Thus one of the first figures in the program sets the tone for the depiction of many others: Jerome as both Biblical exegete and ascetic, Aquinas as both scholar and mystic, or Loyola as both administrator and visionary. These complex mixtures were clearly meant to be food for thought for the students who would worship in the chapel.



The inevitability of a test that will overwhelm the individual, well as the acute perception of failure is represented in Peter. The text in Luke’s Gospel (22: 31-32) presents Christ’s foretelling this crisis: “Behold, Satan has demanded to sift you like wheat. But I have prayed that your own faith may not fail: and once you have turned back you must strengthen your brothers.” Then Christ predicts that before the cock crows that day, Peter will deny him three times. Peter, while waiting in the courtyard of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish law

court, was questioned about his relationship to the man being tried. As Peter answered for the third time, "I do not know the man," a cock crowed. Peter then "went out and began to weep bitterly."

The borders show the symbols associated with Peter. The cock is the symbol of Peter's denial. Peter is believed to have been crucified head downwards, thus the inverted cross. The ship of state, the papal throne and the dome of St. Peter's appear. In the lunette above Peter's head is a fish, representing Peter as first a fisherman and then a fisher of men, in fulfillment of Christ's promise (Luke 5:10). A small insert in the upper scene shows Peter kneeling before Christ, an allusion to another spiritual crisis in Peter's life: tradition holds that as he fled Rome and authorities sought his death, he experienced a vision of Christ. When Peter asked, *Quos vadis, Domine?* (Where are you going, Lord?), Christ replied, "To Rome to be sacrificed anew." Peter then returned to Rome, was arrested and crucified.



The lower scene is loosely based on the fresco by Perugino in the Sistine Chapel, *Giving of the Keys to Saint Peter* (1481), reproduced in Anna Jameson's *Sacred and Legendary Art*, although here the Virgin is added. Perugino was the teacher of the Renaissance painter Raphael, whose representations of events such as the *Transfiguration*, the *Archangel Michael Triumphant over Satan*, and the *Madonna and Child* became standard references for generations. The Cathedral of the Holy Cross in Boston, for example, from which the College took its name, has an 1870s-era stained glass window of Michael based on the painting by Raphael. Perugino's image of Christ and Peter achieved the same kind of authority.