



The Apostles, St. Peter

St. Peter, the Prince of the Apostles and first pope, and founder, with St. Paul, of the see of Rome, was a native of Bethsaida, near Lake Tiberias. This town was in the region of Galilee and his father was of the tribe of Naphtali. His family were fishermen by trade; Peter, along with his brother Andrew, worked alongside their father. It is believed that theirs was a middle-class Jewish home and that they devoutly practiced the Jewish faith. Although fishermen by trade, “it would be a great mistake to infer from [this] occupation that [they] were ignorant much more, illiterate. Physical labor was held in honor among the Hebrews. The rabbis encouraged even the rich to learn some useful trade.” On the other hand, “even the poorest [were expected] to master reading and writing.”

It was probably St. Peter’s mother who began his religious education, for “it was the mother who began the important work of educating a Jewish boy from the time he was “separated unto God’ at his circumcision until he was about six years old.” Then his father would take over his formation, “drill[ing] him in ... the first five books of the Bible ... until he was ten. The men of Israel took this duty so seriously that they went without food or sleep, if necessary, to fulfill it.” He would also learn classical Hebrew and the Aramaic dialect. Those who neglected educating youth in “the fundamental truths about God and His Chosen People [were considered] not better than the heathen or the publican.” At about ten years old, the rabbis continued what his parents had begun. St. Peter probably studied with them until the age of twelve. (This aspect of education was considered so important that it was unlawful “for a family to live where there was no school.”) Because “it seemed likely enough that he would spend his life as a fisherman,” St. Peter was not trained as a scribe or doctor of the Law. (Note: Scripture refers to some of the Apostles as “illiterate and ignorant” because they had not pursued these higher studies.)

(Sources and Quotations: [St. Peter the Apostle, Encyclopedia of Saints](#))