

Cathedral Church of St Peter in Exeter

Exeter Cathedral is properly known as the Cathedral Church of Saint Peter in Exeter



Facts about St Peter

The son of a fisherman, Peter came from the village of Bethsaida in Galilee.

Peter worked the fishing nets with his father and his brother Andrew at the lakeside town of Capernaum. Andrew also joined the group of Jesus' disciples on the same day.

Peter and Andrew were among the first to be chosen by Jesus to be his close followers.

From the moment Jesus met Peter he knew that Peter would be the rock of the Church.

He is traditionally considered to be the head of Jesus' 12 Apostles.

Peter's original name was Simon, Peter being a name given to him by Jesus. Jesus gave Peter the added name of Cephas, an Aramaic appellation meaning "rock." This was translated into Greek as Petros (from the Greek petra, "rock") and became the Latin Petrus and the English Peter.

Peter was the first Bishop of Rome.

It was Peter who was the first of the Apostles to see Jesus after his resurrection from the dead.

St. Peter is the patron saint of Popes, Rome, fishermen, and locksmiths.

What do the keys of St Peter symbolize?



The Keys are a symbol of Saint Peter.

The Keys of Saint Peter or the Keys of Heaven are an emblem of the Catholic Church and a symbol of papal authority. Here at Exeter they are often set as crossed as the logo shows. The keys represent the divine authority that was vested before the death of Jesus in the apostle Peter.

St Peter here is the gatekeeper.

It is said that a human life comes to earth from God in heaven, we live our life here then when our life is ended, we will meet St Peter holding open the gates of heaven for us to re-enter.

The sword can represent purification of pain and suffering, also fortitude, strength purity and virtue.

What does the Bible say about the gatekeeper of Heaven?

"I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

This is the most detail we get from the Bible on the gatekeeper question. The concept of Peter standing at the gates of heaven is actually a later interpretation of Scripture.



The statue of Saint Peter by Simon Verity, 1985

Look up at the West Front of the Cathedral, you will see a modern interpretation of Saint Peter. Most images depict of an older bearded man, which you will be able to spot in several places around the Cathedral. In this instance, Simon has portrayed Peter in his youth, at the time that Jesus would have met him. He is in his naked glory as God made him and you can see from the photo, the fishing net around his feet and two keys in his right hand.

In the Rose Window at the west front you will see Saint Peter in the centre, holding a bible and his two keys. He is flanked by significant royalty and bishops.

Interesting fact - Cathedrals and churches are always rotated east to west with the chancel (it is the area around an altar in a church where the choir and the clergy sit), sanctuary (the front part of the church from where the Priest stands during Mass. It is usually elevated from the nave, where the congregation sit) and altar (raised platform or table) in the east. This is because the east faces towards the holy city of Jerusalem which is where, in medieval writing, God's presence was said to be strongest, and this means the front will always be at the west.