

It had to be a rooster. Nothing else was nearly as appropriate. Jesus knew Peter well. He chose the crow of the rooster to bring Simon to his knees.

A rooster really thinks he is something. He struts around the barnyard. He is a god among the other animals. And when he crows, he lets them all know it.

And so it had to be a rooster, because just hours before the rooster crowed, Peter himself was crowing like a rooster: *“I will never deny You! I’m really something! I have what it takes to follow You, Lord, through thick and thin.”* Simon was the cockiest rooster of them all. His crow was the loudest of them all. He strutted among the other disciples, his head high, his chest out in front. In his mind, he was really something.

I’ve never witnessed a cockfight. Nor do I intend to. I hear they can be pretty gruesome. The biggest, strongest, most aggressive rooster can easily and quickly destroy his opponent. Simon was a big aggressive rooster. But he wasn’t in a cockfight. He was in a fight with a lion. The night Jesus was betrayed, in the courtyard of Caiaphas, Peter was not in a fight with another rooster, but with the roaring lion Satan. And when a lion is matched against a rooster, the lion will win every time.

It was over quickly. A servant girl says to Peter, *“You also were with the Nazarene, Jesus.”* (The lion attacks this proud rooster.) *“I do not know what you mean,”* Peter replies. Again, the lion strikes - the servant girl says, *“This man is one of them.”* But again, Simon Peter denies it. One more strike by the lion and the proud rooster is lying dead in his faith - some bystanders say, *“Certainly you, too, are one of them, for you are a Galilean.”* Peter invokes a curse upon himself. *“May I be cursed forever if I am lying... I do not know the man!”* And immediately, as this proud disciple is laying at Satan’s feet, the rooster crows a second time, and Peter remembers Jesus’ words, *“Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times.”*

There is no room for roosters in Jesus’ family. God opposes the proud, but He gives grace to the humble. There is, in truth, a rooster that lives in all of us. And every now and then he has to crow out loud. *“Look at what I do for the Lord! I’m such a good Christian. Others should be more like me.”* Such crowing takes place within our hearts daily. And sometimes we let these proud crows out with our mouths.

God closes His ears to such crows, but Satan listens. He loves to get into fights with proud roosters. He easily defeated Peter, and he can easily defeat us. When we are proud of ourselves, we deny our Lord. God resists the proud because the proud are resisting him. When we take credit for who we are, for what we do in service to God and others, for our place in God’s family, we are denying that all this is purely by God’s grace. Jesus? I don’t know the man, not as much as I know what I do for Him.

Peter was humbled after he realized his utter sinfulness. He went out and he wept bitterly. His proud crows turned into repentant cries. His head lowered in sorrow. His chest sunk in anguish. He became like Christ on the cross. Never once did Jesus crow out proudly. He was not strutting. His feet were held fast by nails. Jesus did not hold His head high but bowed it low in death. His

chest sunk in as His lungs collapsed. Jesus was no rooster. He was a lamb. The Lamb of God sacrificed on the cross for proud roosters like us.

And by His humble death, He defeated the roaring lion. One drop of His blood overcomes Satan's vicious strikes. That blood was sprinkled on your head in your baptism. That blood is given to you in the Sacrament from this altar. By that blood you are forgiven. All of you proud roosters, and this one too, are forgiven by your gracious God.

Jesus defeats the roaring lion by His blood, and He also defeats our pride. The less we look at Jesus, the more we will crow like roosters. But the more we gaze upon the Crucified One and believe that He died there in agony for us, the less we will crow.

This Lenten journey is so important for us. It tames the rooster in us, pointing us away from ourselves to the Lamb of God. Amen.