Was Peter the First Pope?

A. The resignation of Pope Benedict XVI has made headlines around the world in recent days. The appointment of a new pope will continue to make news in the days and weeks to come.
B. Sprinkled throughout the news coverage are references to Peter, one of the apostles of Jesus Christ, as "the original pope" and Benedict XVI being the 264th successor in a long line of popes.
C. Is that true? What can we find in the New Testament to determine if Peter was the first pope?

I. **"In Later Times Some Will Depart From the Faith"**
   A. The _____ of Jesus Christ isn't hard to find in the New Testament (*Matt 16:18; 1 Cor 3:11; Eph 1:22-23; Jude 3; Acts 11:26; 1 Pet 4:16; John 17:20-21; Eph 4:3-6*).

   B. The Holy Spirit warned that _____ would be disrupted (*Acts 20:27-31; 1 Tim 4:1-3; 2 Tim 4:1-4*).

II. **The Historical Development of Roman Catholicism**
   A. The establishing of "presiding elders," "bishops," "dioceses," "metropolitans," and "patriarchs."

   B. Pivotal consequences of the Council of Nicea in 325 AD.

   C. The rise of an "infallible" Pope, "Father of princes and kings, Ruler of the world, Vicar of Christ."

III. **Much-Needed Input From the New Testament**
   A. The office of *pope* is never mentioned, unlike _____ (*Matt 10:1-4; Eph 4:11; 1 Cor 12:27-28*) elders (*Acts 14:23; Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:1-7*) deacons (*Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:8-13*) evangelists (*2 Tim 4:5*).

   B. Christ alone is exalted as the _____ of his church (*Eph 1:22-23; 5:22-24; Heb 4:15; 13:20; Matt 23:1-12; 2 Thes 2:3-4; Matt 4:10*).

   C. Was Peter the first pope? Consider a few easily-discovered facts about Peter:
       1. Peter was _____ (*Matt 8:14; 1 Cor 9:5*).
       2. As an _____, Peter didn't exalt himself above other elders (*1 Pet 5:1-2*).
       3. Peter was most certainly _____ (*Matt 26:69-75; Gal 2:14*).
       4. Peter refused the _____ of his fellow man (*Acts 10:25-26*).

   D. In several ways, _____ would have been more "qualified" to be the first pope than Peter!

   E. Thanks be to God that we are not _____! (*2 Tim 3:16-17; 1 Pet 5:4; John 18:36; Heb 13:8; Matt 28:18-20*).