

Binding and Loosing

Matthew 16:19; 18:15-20; 23:1-3

WHAT WE FOUND

Binding and loosing turned out to be first-century legal language: to forbid and permit, to exclude and readmit, official acts that heaven ratifies (Matthew 16:19). And the grammar drew the Church's architecture for us: the keys and singular binding to Peter alone (Matthew 16), binding and loosing shared with the Twelve (Matthew 18:18). One steward, many officers, one household (CCC 880-882).

The night's biggest discovery was hiding in the Torah itself: Deuteronomy 17:8-13, where hard cases go up to the priests and the judge, and their verdict binds, "you shall not turn aside... either to the right hand or to the left." God's people were never a book-alone people, by the Book's own command. And Jesus supplied the distinction that guards it all: the scribes and Pharisees "sit on Moses' seat," so observe what they teach, not what they do (Matthew 23:2-3). The office can outlive the sins of its holders, because its authority never came from their virtue.

The purpose under all of it is mercy with a spine: consciences settled, sinners excluded only to be won back (Matthew 18:15-17), forgiveness spoken with authority (John 20:23), and a Magisterium that "is not superior to the Word of God but serves it" (CCC 86).

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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St. John Chrysostom *On the Priesthood, Book 3*

Chrysostom stands in awe of the authority Christ lodged in his ministers: God has given to men, he says, an authority he gave neither to angels nor archangels, for what priests do below, God ratifies above, the Master confirming the sentence of his servants. Chrysostom's point is not clerical pride but trembling: such power exists only as stewardship, and its holders will answer for it.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Augustine *Sermon 295, on the feast of Saints Peter and Paul*

Augustine preaches that what was given to Peter was given for the whole Church: Peter, bearing the figure of the Church's unity, received the keys so that when the Church binds and looses, Christ's promise is at work in her. For Augustine the singular gift and the whole body are not rivals; the one man holds the keys precisely so that the many may be one.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Cyprian of Carthage *Letter 33*

Cyprian grounds the Church's whole ordered structure in the words spoken to Peter: the Lord, establishing

the honor of the bishop and the order of his Church, built her upon Peter, and from that founding the ministry of oversight and the authority to govern descend through time. For Cyprian, to attack the order is to attack the founding sentence itself.

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

1.

Take one hard question you have been carrying and actually look up what the Church teaches, in the Catechism, not a comment section. Bring what you find, and how it landed, next week.

2.

Go to confession this week and notice the binding and loosing happening in real time: the tribunal of mercy is Matthew 16 and 18 still operating.

3.

Keep the daily Our Father for the pope, adding this week: "Lord, give your Church shepherds who practice what they preach."

MEMORY VERSE

"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." (Matthew 16:19, RSV2CE)

BEFORE NEXT SESSION

Read **Luke 22:24-34** slowly, twice. Notice exactly when the argument about greatness happens, and count the pronouns in verses 31 and 32: who does Satan demand, and who does Jesus pray for? First blank stays sealed one more week.

Catechism Connection: CCC 85-87; 880-882; 1444-1445