

Take-Home Four

Bind and Loose

Unless Someone Guides Me | Session Four

What We Found

Matthew 16 is not a free-standing metaphor about keys. It draws its imagery straight from Isaiah 22, where a royal steward is installed over the house of David: one man singled out, a key laid on his shoulder, authority to open and shut that no one reverses, and a paternal title. In Isaiah the whole point is that one man vacates the office and another fills it. An office that changes hands is not a personal gift that dies with the man.

In Acts 15 the Church faced a genuine dispute where both sides could quote Scripture, and it was settled by an assembly that debated, decided, and wrote that it had seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us.

And we said the hard things ourselves rather than waiting to hear them: the rebuke at Caesarea Philippi, the three denials, and Paul opposing Peter to his face at Antioch. The commission was never a statement about the man's reliability.

Voices of the Church

Voice of the Church

St. Clement of Rome

Letter to the Corinthians, chs. 42-44

Writing from Rome around the year 96 to a congregation that had deposed its leaders, he argues that the apostles appointed overseers and provided that other approved men should succeed them. Note who is writing to whom, and that he expects to be heard.

Voice of the Church

St. Irenaeus of Lyons

Against Heresies, Book III (summary)

Against those claiming secret apostolic teaching, he points to something public and checkable: the churches the apostles founded can name the men who have held the teaching office in unbroken order.

Voice of the Church

St. Leo the Great

Given as a summary of his teaching; no locus printed

A fifth-century bishop of Rome, teaching in substance that the care entrusted to Peter did not lapse at his death but continues in those who hold his chair.

Ready Response

Three ways this comes up, and what to do.

“The rock is the confession, not Peter.” Say that the confession matters, because it does. Then give him what you found for yourself, since half the room had Isaiah 22 and half had Matthew 16 and neither half knew what the other was holding: one man singled out, a key handed to him, authority to open and shut that nobody reverses, a paternal title, and in Isaiah an office that one man vacates and another fills. Nobody arranged that for you. You put the two lists side by side. Then be as honest as the session was, because it will cost you nothing: one scene does not settle everything Catholics believe about the papacy. What it settles is that Matthew 16 is an installation, and that the office was built to change hands.

“Jesus called Peter Satan.” Get there before he does, and put the three denials and Antioch on the table yourself. You did that in the room and it cost nothing. Then say the thing that took the sting out of it: the promise was never a compliment. Christ said in advance that this man would fail him and handed him the charge anyway, and the same Gospel keeps the promise and the rebuke on the same page without any embarrassment about it.

“There were wicked popes.” Agree, and do not go soft on it; the history is the history and he will trust you more for saying so. Then say what the promise is actually about: the preservation of teaching, not the holiness of the man. Learn the conditions in CCC 891 well enough to state them without the page in front of you, and note that outside those conditions a pope’s ordinary teaching still asks something of a Catholic (CCC 892) without being irreformable. Do that once and you will be calm about this for the rest of your life, because you will know how much of what he is attacking the Church never claimed.

Live It This Week

- Read John 21:15-19, where the man who denied three times is asked three times and given a charge.
- Pray for the Pope by name once this week, whatever you think of him.
- Learn the conditions in CCC 891 well enough to state them from memory.
- Bring your sealed envelope next week. Do not open it.

Memory Verse

“For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us ...” **Acts 15:28**

Before Next Session

Read: Hosea 11:1. One verse. Note carefully who it says came out of Egypt.

Catechism: CCC 552-553, 857, 880-882, 891.