

Take-Home 3 | Until the End of the Age

The Keys of the Kingdom

Peter's office in Christ's Church

Keep this sheet for prayer, review, and practice this week.

What We Found

Peter confessed Christ, and Christ gave Peter the keys and the power to bind and loose, in the singular. Isaiah 22 showed us what a key means: a steward runs the king's house on the king's behalf, with real authority that outlasts him. Jesus gave Peter the sheep three times, and in the same conversation predicted his failure and told him to strengthen the brothers. The Church understands Peter's pastoral office as continuing in the bishops of Rome. That teaching does not say popes are sinless or always right. (Matthew 16:13-19; Isaiah 22:19-23; John 21:15-17; Luke 22:31-32; CCC 880-882; 891.)

Voices of the Church

Pope Benedict XVI

Summary: In his catechesis on Peter, Benedict reads the three images Jesus gives him, the rock, the keys, and the power to bind and loose, as one particular responsibility within the Church. Peter is made the foundation of the Church's faith and unity, and his ministry serves that faith and communion.

General Audience, 7 June 2006

St. Irenaeus of Lyons

Summary: Irenaeus singles out the Church of Rome, founded and organized by Peter and Paul, as the church with which every church must agree because of its preeminent authority. He then lists its bishops from Linus down to his own day. This is an early witness to Rome's place, not a full statement of later papal definitions.

Against Heresies, III.3.2-3

Second Vatican Council

Summary: Just as Peter and the other Apostles formed one apostolic college, so the Roman Pontiff, Peter's successor, and the bishops, successors of the Apostles, are joined together. The college has authority only together with its head, and the pope's full, supreme, and universal power over the Church is preserved.

Lumen Gentium, 22

Ready Response

If someone says: "The rock is Peter's faith, not Peter. The papacy is built on a misreading."

You can say: Christians do read "this rock" differently, and I am happy to talk about that. But look at the next verse. "I will give you the keys" is addressed to one person. Whatever the rock is, the keys are Peter's, and a key in Isaiah 22 means a steward's continuing office.

Live It This Week

Pray. Pray daily this week for the pope, your bishop, and the unity of all Christians.

Read. Read Lumen Gentium 22 slowly. Note what it says about the pope and what it says about the other bishops in the same paragraph.

Practice. Explain, using John 21, the difference between Christ's authority and authority exercised in his name.

Scripture Memory

"But I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail; and when you have turned again, strengthen your brethren."

Luke 22:32 (RSV2CE)

A Personal Response

How can I grow in both love for Christ's Church and honesty about the need for conversion inside her, starting with me?

Before Next Session

Read: Matthew 18:15-20; Acts 15:1-29. Read Acts 15 in one sitting and notice who speaks and in what order.

Catechism: CCC 83, 85-86, 1444-1445.

In the Catechism this week: 552-553; 880-882; 891; 1444.