

The Pastor's Corner...

The Rock of Our Salvation

In today's Gospel story, Jesus turns to Simon, the leader among the Apostles:

"I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

These are extraordinarily strong and meaningful words about the Church and the new office entrusted to Peter, the first pope, and his successors.

Peter is a new name given by Jesus to Simon, son of Jonah. His name is invented by Jesus based on the literal meaning of the Hebrew word and its Greek translation in the New Testament. Peter's name comes from the word "rock." Accordingly, we have a play on words: you are Peter [**Petros**], and upon this rock [**petra**] I will build my Church. These amazing words—*"the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it"*—about the indestructible nature of the Church and the indestructible office of the pope serving the Church have a profound theological consequence.

The entire passage first testifies that the Church is not created by just a group of people who decided to follow Jesus, their leader. No. It was **Jesus himself, God himself, who created** the Church to serve as an instrument of leading people to God and to His eternal Kingdom: *"upon this rock I will build my church."*

Second, since the Church is an instrument or sacrament of the salvation instituted by God, which is defended, led, and fed by the love of God himself, therefore, *"the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it."* Even the vilest elements of this visible world and spiritual world are not able to destroy Her.



Third, the Church has a double nature. It is human because it is comprised of human beings living here on earth. On the other hand, it is divine and spiritual since Jesus Christ is her Head and leader, although hidden to human senses. Because the Church is human, it also carries everything that is connected with humanity—weaknesses and sinfulness, but also beauty, heroism, dedication, and sacrifice of its members. At the same time, the Church is Holy as a congregation that is founded, led, and sanctified by God himself.

Fourth, the Church is not just an additional noble, charitable, and educational organization in the world. The primary goal of the Church, or the *raison d'être*, is to **evangelize** people and **sanctify** the world—to be salt and light for the world. The charitable, educational, and other activities of the Church are simply natural and logical consequences of believing in Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world.

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