

Mt 16:13-20; Isa 22:19-23; Rom 11:33-36 Servant-Leaders of God

I know the question on everyone's mind: Why did Jesus give Peter the keys?

Instead of a rock, Peter's faith is more like a shifting pile of sand:

He didn't have enough faith to walk on water. He denied Jesus three times.
And when Jesus was crucified, he was nowhere to be found.

But that's ok! Because no matter how weak in character we may be; no matter how many times we fail; if we are willing...

Jesus will forgive us and love us, and lift us up to the fullness of life (Jn 10:10).
We just saw that.

Jesus asks the apostles, *who do you say that I am?* (Mt 16:15). Peter blurts out: *You are the Christ, the Son of the living God!* (Mt 16:16).

And Jesus says, *Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father* (Mt 16:17).

You see, Jesus was a servant-leader: *the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as ransom for many* (Mt 20:28).

Jesus saw that in Peter, the gift to become a servant-leader. And Jesus sees that in us, the same gift—the gift to become a servant-leader of God—to lead others to Jesus by a life of love and service.

So, Jesus is asking each one of us today: *who do you say that I am?* If He is for us the Son of God, our redeemer, then we must respond not only with our lips,...

but in the choices we make and by the way we live our lives—as His servant-leaders of God!

And there is no better way to cultivate and grow as His servant-leaders than by encountering His love and mercy right here, in the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church.

But let's face it. We will be attacked. Because the Church's teachings on the pope and his infallibility is one of the biggest problems for non-Catholic Christians.

So, why not use the bible itself to prove and defend the Church's teachings?

First of all, Jesus founded one Church, not multiple churches, when He said, *upon this rock I will build my church* (Mt 16:18).

The authority of the Church is apostolic: It comes from God the Father to Jesus, then from Jesus to the apostles, and from the apostles to their successor bishops.

Jesus said to the apostles, *All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me* (Mt 28:18). So, God the Father gave Jesus all authority in heaven and on earth.

Jesus said to the apostles, *As the Father has sent me, so I send you* (Jn 20:21). So Jesus sends the apostles out as the Father has sent Him—with all authority in heaven and on earth.

The teachings of the apostles and their successors are infallible on matters of faith and morals.

At the Last Supper Jesus said to the apostles, *The advocate, the holy Spirit that the Father will send in my name* (Jn 14:26) ...*he will guide you to all truth* (Jn 16:13).

If the Holy Spirit is guiding the apostles, and the Holy Spirit is God, then it makes no mistakes. So, the apostles are infallible when they teach on matters of faith and morals.

Apostolic Succession means the apostles pass their authority on to their successors.

Jesus said, *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...baptizing them...[and] teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you* (Mt 28:19-20).

But how can they do that if the apostles died 60-70 years after Jesus? By apostolic succession.

Jesus said, *I am with you always until the end of the age* (Mt 28:20). But how can Jesus be with the apostles if they did not live to the end of the age? By apostolic succession.

The Pope is the Bishop of Rome, a servant-leader, the successor of Peter with all his authority. It began when Jesus said, *you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church* (Mt 16:18).

And at the Sea of Tiberias, the Risen Jesus says to Peter three times, *Do you love me?* Each time Peter answers, “Yes.” And Jesus says to him, *feed my lambs...tend my sheep...feed my sheep* (Jn 21:15-17).

That was Jesus appointing Peter to shepherd His flock.

Jesus said the gates of hell will never prevail against the Church (Mt 16:18). But if the pope ever teaches in error, that would mean the gates of hell did prevail...

So, it can never happen.

Jesus said to Peter, *Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven* (Mt 16:19).

If God binds or looses in heaven what the pope binds or looses on earth, then it must be free from all error. Because if it isn't, then God would be approving an error. And God would never do that.

Let us pray: Lord Jesus give us all the grace we need, here in the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church to cultivate and grow in our faith,...

so that we may become servant-leaders of God, who defend our Catholic faith and lead others to You by our love and service for them.