



St. Peter and Authority in the Catholic Church

Let's begin with the objection by some that Christ is the only head of the Church. We can go right to Matthew 16:18 which says, "And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Christ is the head of the Church but He did appoint St. Peter to build His Church. St. Peter was the first (Pope) to represent the head of the Church on earth. This name "Peter" [Kepha] means a large massive rock (not a little stone as some would suggest). Christ was not building His Church upon Peter's recognition of who Christ is but upon Peter himself. The gates of hell shall not prevail against it. This means the Church shall persevere to the end.

But some will shout that the Pope can't be the head of the Church. We can get glimpses of why he can even from the Old Testament. Look at Isaiah 22:21-22. "...and I will clothe him with your robe, and will bind your girdle on him, and will commit your authority to his hand; and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. And I will place on his shoulder the **key** of the house of David; he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open."

So Our Blessed Lord in Matthew 16:18 is drawing from this image of the keys when he gives Peter the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven. The keys are a symbol of authority given to the chief official or prime minister of the Kingdom of David. A dynastic succession was also an element of the office of prime minister. When the office was vacated, another was selected to take his place. The Pope is Christ's earthly representative and is the supreme authority of the Kingdom of Heaven here on earth, the Church.

So St. Peter was the lead Apostle. Need more Scripture? How about Luke 22:31-32. "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail; and when you have turned again, strengthen your brethren." So Peter again is distinguished from the other apostles by Jesus. Jesus prays for Peter, that his faith may not fail and tells Peter he must strengthen [lead] the others. No objection from the other apostles is recorded about this leadership role given to Peter. The other apostles knew Peter was the head apostle and recognized it. Satan attacks those who are closest to God since those that are far from God already belong to Satan. The Apostles were prime targets. Our Blessed Lord warns Peter of this.

More on St. Peter, apostolic succession and the Bible coming up. **Stay tuned!!**