

# You are Peter...

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## The Pope and his Authority in Modern Scriptural Terms

'Our name is Peter.' The journalists blinked. Pope Paul was speaking before the World Council of Churches at Geneva in June 1969. The journalists considered such blunt words most undiplomatic. Pope Paul went on, '...Scripture tells us which meaning Christ has willed to attribute to this name, what duties he lays upon us, the responsibilities of the apostle and his successors.'

Pope Paul's plain speaking at Geneva guides us in man's 'crisis of authority' today. Old arguments for papal authority, like arguments for other authority centres, seem to have worn thin. They repel separated Christians and men of good-will beyond Christianity, and they fail to reassure many Catholics bewildered by the well publicized opinions of a few of their brethren. But Pope Paul cuts across all this. He points directly to Scripture. Speaking before separated brethren he appeals to a common source of revealed authority. Following his words, let us enter the exciting realm of Scripture to build afresh credible arguments for the Papacy. In this journey there will be a debt to the work of many non-Catholic scholars, a debt which a Catholic can only repay by using the method of their studies to guide men to the pastoral authority Jesus Christ created.

## ST. MATTHEW'S DIALOGUE; CHRIST AND PETER

The classical debate on papal authority centres on the Gospel of St. Matthew, chapter 16, verses 13 to 20. In the past we thumped out 'Thou art Peter...' as an isolated text and argued over the word 'rock'. Today plucking phrases out of context is better left to certain small sects. The little 'proof text' is twisted easily. Today we consider all the verses as one tradition, or pericope, a united body of text, put together with great care, which must be considered as a whole.

These verses are the climax of Matthew's story of Christ's ministry. Jesus makes a dramatic self-revelation Peter says, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. Jesus candidly accepts this title, and then imposes secrecy on his disciples. This is Matthew's main point. But woven through the text is an answer to another question - not only 'Who is Jesus?', but 'Who is Peter?' Who is this rough fisherman suddenly inspired to recognize the Truth?

To understand this underlying Petrine tradition we note that Jesus is a Rabbi, teaching his disciples using the targum method, the questions and answers of an old-fashioned catechism. For Matthew this targum method develops into a dramatic dialogue of challenge and response.

There are nine stages in this dialogue.

1. 'Who do men say that the Son of man is?' Jesus challenges his disciples as to other men's opinions of himself.
2. 'Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' The disciples respond with other people's false opinions - opinions they perhaps share.

3. 'But who do you say that I am?' Again Jesus challenges his disciples, but now he challenges their own opinions.
4. 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' Only Peter responds, with words he does not fully comprehend, prompted suddenly. Now Peter has thrown a challenge back to Christ. Will Jesus accept his words?
5. 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona! for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. 'Jesus responds with a 'Yes'. He speaks as 'The Christ', the one anointed with authority from God his Father. Later we shall see how crucial these words are.
6. 'And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church' Jesus responds with a new challenge. Peter told Jesus who he is. Unexpectedly Jesus tells Peter who he is.
7. 'And the powers of death (gates of Hell) shall not prevail against it (the Church).' Jesus makes his first promise through Peter to the future assembly of believers.
8. 'I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.' (Note. The New English Bible translation of this passage reads: 'I will give you the keys of the kingdom of Heaven, what you forbid on earth shall be forbidden in heaven, and what you allow on earth shall be allowed in heaven.') Jesus makes his second promise to Peter alone, for the benefit of the community of believers united to Peter.
9. 'Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ.' Jesus imposes secrecy on this revealed truth. For those with faith this truth would be clear in his death and resurrection, events destroying a false notion that he was a military Messiah for the Jews alone. In these nine dramatic points, Matthew weaves his secondary theme. Jesus, the Christ, is creating God's new People, a 'new Israel' based on new promises and a new personal authority.

#### AN ECHO OF WORDS

'Right! You've told me who I am. Now I tell you who you are.' This sums up what Jesus is saying to Peter. The original Greek and the English translations express this in an echo of words.

A. 'You are the Christ...' is echoed by 'You are Peter ...'

B. This echo continues. A description of Christ 'the Son of the living God' is echoed by a description of Peter '...and on this rock I will build my church.' Christ and Peter give each other new names - and then describe what those new names mean.

Considering the balanced grammar of this dramatic exchange, we can only come to one conclusion. Peter is the 'rock'. The disciple told the Rabbi that he was the Christ, Son of the living God. The Rabbi told the disciple that he was Peter, 'Kephas' or 'Petros', the rock on whom God's new People would arise.

What I indicate in the plain sense of the grammar, the scholars Pernot and Cullmann found in the echo of the new names.

1. Jesus Bar-Joseph ('son of Joseph') becomes Jesus Christ, that is, Jesus Anointed One. Then this change is echoed because -
2. Simon Bar-Jona ('son of Jona') becomes Simon-Peter, that is, Simon Rock.

In the Bible, names are important vehicles of power and meaning. Perhaps Matthew saw a symbol of what we call the 'Christian name'. The old Jewish names are changed to new names in God's new People, the Kingdom of Heaven. 'Peter' is not a trite nickname, such as Jesus gave James and John 'sons of thunder' (Mark 3:17). If we could go back to the language Jesus spoke, he was making a pun on the name 'Peter'-'Kephas'-'pebble' or 'stone'. Perhaps 'bed-rock' would be our best English equivalent. Unfortunately the pun vanishes in English and Greek. No-one had ever been given this strange name before, although the rabbis had a saying - 'When God looked on Abraham... he said, "Behold I have found a rock on which I can build and base the world. Therefore he called Abraham a rock."'

God himself is called a 'rock' in the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 32). Perhaps this came from heathen attitudes to stone idols or stone holy places like Mount Sion, objects of endurance, security and trustworthiness. In the New Testament the metaphor is flexible. Christ inherits the rock title (I Corinthians 10:4 and perhaps Romans 9:33). He is also the 'cornerstone' which completes a structure (Matthew 21: 42-44, Ephesians 2-20). But in this second passage the household of God is 'Built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets...' In Galatians 2:9, James, Peter and John are 'pillars'. In Revelation 21:14 the twelve apostles are foundations of the new city of God. The building metaphor is used in the Old Testament for God's creative activity in building the 'house' or 'household' of Israel. So we are not surprised to hear Simon called the 'rock' on whom a new household would be built. But Simon is unique. He alone received this title as a new name, showing new truths in a dramatic dialogue of truth.

#### BUILT ON A MERE MAN?

To set out the logic of the Matthew passage is not enough. The sensible objection arises - how can the Church be built on a mere man? The Western mind can accept the view that the Church was built on an idea. This is why some argue that the 'rock' is an idea, Peter's words, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.'

Traditionally these words have been called 'Peter's confession of faith'. This is rather fanciful. At this stage in his relationship with Jesus, Peter did not have much faith. Just after the dramatic dialogue, Jesus calls him 'Satan', a rebuke when Peter rejected the death and resurrection meaning of the title he had given to Jesus. In the crisis of the Cross, Peter was a coward. Even after his repentance and conversion he had human lapses in judgement. How could the Church be built on such a man?

In a general way 'Christianity' may be ideas, fine words, inspiring thoughts. We could say that the idea 'You are the Christ...' is the foundation of Christianity.

But the Church is different. The Church is People. In simple terms the Church is a community of persons, founded by the Person, Christ, on a person who was the first inspired to recognize him. The Church is not a system of nice ideas. It is not a club for nice people. It is a universal community, spanning time and space, and the word 'ecclesia' which Matthew used for 'church' means that it is an assembly of people called together by God. In that called-together People, Peter symbolizes the first convert - a weak human being who responded to God's free invitation to share his Life, the freedom of the Holy Spirit, the strength of his free Gift, 'Grace'. God lavishes this strength on the weakest men who accept his Son as a personal Saviour in a tangled world.

After his sin, stupidity and suffering, Peter repented and became the 'rock' in moral terms. Jesus' promise was fulfilled. Peter strengthened his brethren (Luke 22: 31-32) in the Church of sinners,

created for sinners by One who came to call sinners (Mark 2:17). The cruel Saul, whose name became Paul, 'little one', experienced God's Grace and wrote that Christ said to him, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness' (2 Corinthians 12:9).

We are not surprised to find this one Church founded on a fisherman. Its Founder moulded it out of the poor, the diseased, neurotics, prostitutes, racketeers and social outcasts. In the Gospels he told his People to be like children, promising them that the meek will inherit every thing. He upturned the world's values by telling his People that the first amongst them must be the 'servant of all', assuring his freedom fighters that they are victorious when they perish as martyrs. All this, Peter the fisherman had to learn.

When he grew old, men carried this 'servant of all' where he did not wish to go (John 21: 18, 19), and on the Vatican hill in Rome the bones of Peter the martyr were buried. A long line of his successors have walked on that hill, some guilty of deeds worse than Peter's failings. But always the supernatural quality of the rock has endured. Always '...my power is made perfect in weakness.'

Christ moulded that new People beginning with Peter, the People who would always be Christ, a living organism, his 'mystical Body'. He gives this Body the power constantly to reproduce itself. Its living cells of two thousand years ago are its living cells of today. The form of the Body never changes. The foundation cell, visible nucleus of unity, was a Jewish fisherman. The visible nucleus is always the living successor of Simon Peter.

#### INFALLIBLE WORDS

We have entered the supernatural dimension of the dialogue between Christ and Peter. All Christians revere the words 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' These words are the foundation idea of Christianity, of the Faith entrusted to the Church built on Peter. But if Peter did not understand these words, how could he say them?

Jesus gives us the answer, blunt words, the key to the whole dialogue 'Flesh and blood has not revealed it to you, but my Father who is in heaven.'

'No man told you this. My Father revealed this truth to you.' This sums up what Christ meant. Peter's words expressed a perfect truth. When it becomes a genuine 'confession of faith', the statement, 'You are the Christ...' is the basic truth (or 'dogma' - the same word) of the Christian revelation. So Peter spoke infallibly. From his fumbings later, we know he did not speak as a man at this point. He was inspired.

Infallibility. Men wince at the word, but assume infallible accuracy in their own newspapers, political theories or private opinions. It seems too much to allow God to be himself in 'our' world, imparting that small measure of certainty which Catholics call Infallibility.

The situation at that critical revelation moment at Caesarea Phillipi has not changed in two thousand years. Only the questions are new. 'Who do you say that I am?' - a question. Men fumble, repeating hearsay, then for a brief instant there is clarity, a moment of revelation. Another question - what was the nature and origin of the Hebrew maid who bore Christ? Men grope and fumble, working and reflecting their way to truth. Another question - what is the supreme and unique teaching authority of the successors of Peter? Men argue at extremes, reaching out for what they know instinctively. Yet another question - what was the destiny of Mary, the Mother of Christ? With memories and legends to clothe what they already know, men seek for final precision and depth.

All these questions were resolved. God still speaks. At rare times, within God's People, the Holy Spirit protects a human voice from error, and a Pope speaks infallibly.

What paradoxes of the new creation that voice teaches! A young Rabbi is Christ the Son of God. His Mother was created for him, created perfect. As the first of millions of believers, she was taken to God body and soul. A Bishop in Italy is the teacher of mankind, assured of a unique gift.

## THE ULTIMATE AUTHORITY

The hard part had to come. Matthew was leading us to an ultimate encounter with authority. The 'Infallibility' moment will seem to many to be the last straw. It is not as if Catholics turn the Pope into a magic oracle or computer. This is as ludicrous as the tale that Catholics pay money at confession. The core of the problem is the authority at stake - not the authority of Peter, Pius, John or Paul, but the authority of Jesus of Nazareth. St. Thomas More faced a choice of loyalty, to his King, Henry VIII or to the Pope. In a well known play, More describes the Pope as our only link with Christ. I once thought this was going too far. Surely we have many links with Christ. But More was talking of authority. His decision had to be made in terms of authority. His priorities were in order. He looked first to Christ, then to Christ's deputy on earth, then to the King who was ripping away the God-given authority of Christ's earthly representative. So the Chancellor of England went to the block for the sake of a not very reputable Italian Bishop - at least that is how cynics could see it.

More suffered over his decision, well aware of St. Paul's assurance that God orders human society and government. But he also knew that Christ must rule socially, in truth, justice and love. More perceived a 'revolution of authority' in Christ. Rulers, money, force, intellect, even law, are not final authorities. Christ is the final Authority. He is Truth.

The Gospel writers experienced this in many ways, but always as a steadfast love honest enough to die for a disordered world. Mark expounded the Person who is Truth in actions, Luke in parables and relationships, John in the promise of the Spirit of Truth for God's People (John 16: 12-15), but Matthew captured Truth in the dialogue with Peter. In God's tangible revelation the Church is People, God becomes a Man, meeting men in people, giving him self up to die, giving himself as Bread. 'What is truth?' Pilate asked in stupidity or cynicism. Bleeding with the thorns of voluntary death, Truth stood looking at him. In God's tangible revelation, a tangible authority, a Person, will pass on a tangible authority in his representatives Peter and the Popes. God's revelation is always tangible, not mere memories.

'They were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority' (Mark 1:22). Christ's confident dogmatic authority ('exousia' in the Greek) was the Gift he received from his Father. Moreover, in Christ authority and freedom coincide. This is not a Marxist or fascist error that men find freedom by submitting to dictatorships. Obedience to Christ's authority is not submission to force, but free acceptance of Truth. Peter resorted to force in Gethsemani. Jesus cried out, 'No more of this!' (Luke 22:51). Some Popes used force and failed disastrously. On the other hand when men have used force against Petrine authority they have harvested catastrophe. All who run against Truth ultimately fail.

Peter himself said, 'Lord to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life...' (John 6 :68). For Christians, arguments over authority come to the point of all or nothing. The Person who warned us that we cannot serve two masters will not encourage us to choose which of his 'words of

eternal life' suit our own tastes. 'This is my Body.' 'You are Peter.' St. Thomas Aquinas' words on the former statement apply equally to the latter.

'What God's Son has told me, take for truth I do. Truth himself speaks truly - or there's nothing true.'

## WAYS AROUND THE PROBLEM

Jesus the Truth does not force anyone to accept himself or the living authority he has created for men. Our conscience must decide, informed adult conscience as mature reason. We may consider Scriptural ways around Papal authority.

Perhaps the dialogue in Matthew 16 did not happen. Perhaps it was invented by a school of scribes, interested in a Jewish form of Church ruled by Christian rabbis. There is a word in the text which appears nowhere else in the Gospels, 'ecclesia' - church. But this comes from the Greek text of the Old Testament, well known to our Gospel writer. The critic Bultmann respects this Matthew text as being ancient. It may even go back to Aramaic, the language spoken by Christ from which we have the name 'Kephass', Peter.

The Old Testament perhaps influenced the way Matthew described the encounter between Christ and Peter. Moses led the assembled old Israel and received God's old agreement, conditional promises. Peter becomes the foundation of the new Israel, and through Christ received God's new agreement, unconditional promises. '... and the powers of death shall not prevail...'

Perhaps Matthew embroidered Mark's shorter account of the dialogue (Mark 8:27-30). But the question is not settled as to whether Mark is the original Gospel and theories conflict as to how the four texts relate to one another. If Matthew added to Mark's text, where did he gather his additional information? Why did he make such 'dogmatic' additions? Early Christian writers esteemed his Gospel, quoting profusely from it, even regarding it as the 'first' Gospel.

The Swedish scholar Stendahl has shown that Matthew 9 arranged the dialogue between Christ and Peter as the climax of his account of Christ's ministry, an event to introduce a study of the 'institutional Church' in this most Jewish and ecclesiastical of the Gospels.

Modern scriptural research follows the preservation and development of memories in the community of believers. The Catholic has nothing to fear and greater insight to gain by seeing this process at work. It is 'tradition', a living process within the Church, the handing on of the observations and experiences of the Christ event.

From the Acts of the Apostles there is a more traditional way around Petrine authority. 1. Peter erred by requiring converts to follow Jewish laws (Acts 10, 11 and Galatians 2). But the author of Acts shows Peter receiving another direct revelation, in a dream, which corrects him. A dispute with Paul may be a more ancient version of this. 2. At the Council of Jerusalem Peter does not preside. The local Apostle James is President (Acts 15). But Peter has the first say at the Council. He makes the crucial decision. James has the final say, and makes a judgement, or so it seems in the English text. He only repeats what Peter said in traditional terms. As a relative of Christ, James was respected at Jerusalem.

The historical accuracy of Acts is a debated question, but the doctrine of Acts is at harmony with the Gospels. Peter's primacy is clear in the early chapters, a fuller authority than his role as spokesman for the twelve in the Gospels, because now he takes the place of the Lord. Acts completes Christ's promises. The Church is born in the first Christian Pentecost (Acts 2). The Holy Spirit comes upon

the twelve and they proclaim the Gospel to the street crowds. But who speaks first and foremost? St. Peter.

Pentecost fulfills God's plan for Peter in the Church. In Matthew's tradition the Father spoke through Peter, the Son recognized him and gave him authority. At Pentecost the Holy Spirit gave him ability to use this authority.

## THE KEYS

In Matthew's dialogue some puzzling metaphors define papal authority. Simon Peter received the 'keys of the kingdom of heaven', assured that whatever he bound or loosed on earth would be bound or loosed in heaven.

The rabbis used the terms 'binding and loosing' to describe decisions made by men in authority in matters of the Law, the Torah. Jesus uses Torah language in Matthew 16:19. Jews would see him making Simon Peter the chief rabbi in his new Israel. Peter received complete juridical authority. Later this is extended to the other apostles, but in the context of how Christians resort to excommunication (Matthew 18 :18). But only Peter received the mysterious 'keys'.

In Isaiah 22:22 keys symbolize a king's authority, responsibility for his nation. In Revelation 1:18 Christ declares in a symbolic vision that he has the 'keys of death and Hades' because he rose from the dead. In Revelation 3:7 he has the 'key of David', royal power as the 'holy one, the true one... who opens and no one shall shut, who shuts and no one opens.' These meanings converge in the keys of Peter. Assurance of invincible power for God's People, the keys of death whereby the powers of death ('gates of Hell') never prevail, are also keys of princely authority and responsibility. Peter has pastoral responsibility for souls, on which a man's resurrection to salvation may depend.

Jesus rebuked the Jewish lawyers, '...you have taken away the key of knowledge...' (Luke 11:52). They had obscured the old Scriptures so that they no longer pointed to Christ's kingdom of justice. But what knowledge is the key to that kingdom? Peter uttered that knowledge. Christ imposed secrecy on it. Today it is an open secret for all believers. 'You are the Christ...' This is the key to the kingdom, saving words from a fisherman at the beginning of a new line of living authority for mankind.

## AUTHORITY IN FAITH AND MORALS

The keys give meaning to a logical argument for the Petrine authority in Faith and Morals, exercised today by the Pope. The argument runs like this.

(a) Peter exercised authority by asserting a matter of Faith. (b) Christ recognized and confirmed this authority in four ways. (c) But Christ is Truth, the Word of God, so his promise for God's People continues in the Popes who succeed Peter. (d) Therefore - the successors of Peter have authority to teach in matters of Faith and Morals.

Let us carefully examine each stage of this argument.

(a) In the words and context of Matthew's text, Peter asserted the essential Christian truth, a matter of Faith.

(b) On four occasions in Scripture Christ recognizes Peter's right to make such an utterance. (i) Matthew 16: 17, the revelation passage containing the seeds of Infallibility. (ii) Matthew 16: 19, the keys, binding and loosing, rabbinical authority symbols related to other images of power in

Scripture. (iii) Luke 22: 31-32, Christ's moving promise. Peter's authority depends on future conversion. 'Simon, Simon, behold Satan demanded 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.' (iv) John 21: 15-19, Peter's faith does not fail. He turns again. Christ forgives his triple denial with a triple demand of love and gift of authority. 'Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?' He said to him, 'Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.' He said to him, 'Feed my lambs...' In a resurrection context, John affirms Peter's primacy as the chief shepherd of the new Church. The Good Shepherd (John 10) gives his People a shepherd and a servant (John 13).

(c) Jesus is the Truth. If he makes a promise, Christians accept it. But do his promises endure beyond the time of the apostles? Most Christians answer, 'Of course they do!' Catholics go further. They belong to that authentic and continuous community in which the Church subsists. They know that Christ is always with this living organism, that Catholic Faith is not 'religion', pious memories or ideas, that their way of life has been lived for two thousand years. They know that early Christians also revered the Petrine authority which endured in Rome after Peter died. No modern scholar seriously questions Peter's presence in ancient Rome, and excavations at his tomb show tangible signs of devotion and conviction that his authority abides in the Bishops of Rome. In spite of wars, schisms, social and political chaos, bad or weak Popes, this Petrine office remains.

(d) We come to the conclusion of the logical argument. The Pope teaches in matters of Faith and therefore in matters of Morals. Christians find their Morals in the area of Faith - another revolution Christ brought about. This teaching in Faith and Morals is not always infallible, except where it comes in rare moments of clearly defined teaching, the Pope then being both the teacher and voice of the Church. The day to day teaching, usually contained in encyclical letters, is the Ordinary Magisterium, dealing with problems of particular times and changing situations. This Ordinary Magisterium is respected and obeyed by good Catholics because it is used for their good as Christians. It is always subject to the greater principles of the revealed Will of God, the Law of Christ, and the Law which God has implanted in our created human nature.

#### PETER, ONE OF THE TWELVE

Peter was the 'first', the 'servant of all', the deputy ('Vicar') of Christ. But he never acted apart from the twelve apostles. He taught as a leader within the 'apostolic college'. To this college Christ extended the binding and loosing given first to Peter (Matthew 18:18). United to Peter, the apostles governed the early Church, passing on their authority to their successors, the Bishops.

Mutual consultation with one another and communion with Peter's successor are ancient principles of 'collegiality'. In the mid-Third Century St. Cyprian of Carthage wrote, 'The episcopate is one, part of which is held in totality by each (bishop).' Fr. Bevenot has shown 'in totality' (in solidum) to mean that each bishop constitutes the whole Church in his diocese. St. Cyprian squabbled with several Popes, but maintained that the Papacy is the essential centre of unity for the whole Church. He wrote, 'The remainder (of the apostles) were indeed what Peter was, but a primacy was given to Peter and one Church and one chair are displayed.' Even in controversies, Cyprian showed that he did not see this primacy as a mere matter of honour. Nevertheless, he was anxious always to maintain the authority of the college of bishops dispersed throughout the world. Cyprian's ideal was not to last.

In times of crisis Catholics rallied to the Chair of Peter, to Rome. The collapse of the Roman Empire, political challenges in the Middle Ages, schisms at the Reformation and militant political



and intellectual movements in the Nineteenth Century, all these helped centralize papal power. Older ideals of collegiality seemed lost in the need for a strong central Papacy.

Today God's People face forces more ruthless than clear foes of the past. Open persecution in Communist and other totalitarian societies is matched by our bland Western societies, where forces seek to turn God's People from their vocation. With subtle talk of freedom, 'progress', 'human values', in a patronizing way Catholics are told to 'get with it', to conform to convenient values, greed, lust, hypocrisy and fashionable sentimentalism and sensation.

The Second Vatican Council is the Church adapting to this crisis. The Holy Spirit guided Pope John to call an unexpected Council. The Holy Spirit guided that Council in the process of diversifying the authority of Truth to meet the new and diverse attacks on the Gospel of Truth.

Always united to the Chair of Peter, we return to the vision of the Church in the Acts of the Apostles, 'Peter, standing with the eleven', St. Cyprian's ideal. Co-operation around a centre of authority, mutual consultation, intelligent sharing in authority, these principles of collegiality are in action in each diocese and parish, involving laity, clergy and religious. But this means of diversification and adaptation depends on the central pivot, on the man fulfilling the command, 'strengthen your brethren.'

The Second Vatican Council carefully related the successors of the apostles to the successor of the chief apostle. After affirming the Pope's 'supreme, full, immediate and universal authority over the care of souls', his 'primacy of ordinary power over all the churches', the Council Fathers declared, 'But the bishops themselves, appointed by the Holy Spirit, succeed to the place of the Apostles as shepherds of souls. Together with the Pope, and under his authority, their mission is to perpetuate the work of Christ, the eternal Shepherd.' (Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church, n. 2, CTS Translation, Do 356.)

This echoes the First Vatican Council in a Decree which completed the unfinished work of the Council a hundred years ago. As defined in 1870, papal authority has not been modified in the slightest, but to the bishops has been restored that wider authority which historical conditions took from them. Again and again Council documents affirm the supreme control the Pope holds over the apostolic authority of his brother bishops in the Church.

#### A HUMAN RESPONSE - LOYALTY

Collegiality implies loyalty, the human response Christ calls from us when he bids us love him. By reason, conscience and experience, grounded in Faith, Catholics recognize the Papacy as Christ's sacrament of authority, the sign and means of loyalty to the Truth.

It is hard to be loyal to an institution. But the Pope is a person, earthly representative of the Person, Jesus Christ. It is hard to be loyal to a distant person, but Catholics know that the man they call 'the Holy Father', with reverent affection, is also their brother in Christ. When the essence of life is salvation, the Pope is equal to any other member of the redeemed community, baptized into the one Baptism, chrismed by the one Spirit, seeking the same absolution for his sins and fed by the same Bread of Life as his brethren. He received no extra sacrament beyond episcopal ordination which he shares with his brother bishops. But he has been called and elected to an office which is unique, an awesome responsibility for souls. In this we find our loyalty to Peter's successor - a tension between the close relationship each Catholic shares with the Pope as a brother, and the awe with which each Catholic knows that this man bears the burden of his family, the burden of the keys. We considered

the Church as People, a Body, an organism, a community, a household. Now, at the point of loyalty, we see the Church as a family.

In this family the Holy Father is called to suffer. In a family there must be some turmoil. So it was in our Lord's circle of disciples and in the early Church in the Acts of the Apostles. However, in the turmoil we must distinguish between loyal critics and disloyal critics. Some loyal critics of the Papacy have revived discredited theories - the affirmation of national rights for national churches (Gallicanism), or the claim that a Council of all the bishops is above the Pope (Conciliarism). In the Second Vatican Council the Pope and the bishops accepted elements of truth in these theories without concession to error. Other loyal critics have decried baroque pageantry and pomp at the Vatican. These non-essentials of the Petrine Office have been pruned and modernized.

Disloyal critics within the Church may be identified by a test of authority. Where do these men find their ultimate authority? They centre their obedience somewhere beyond the Truth which Christ sets forth in his People. They accept the soft values of Western Humanism, or the fashionable infallibility of sociology, or certain schools of psychology and philosophy, or extreme theological theories discarded by our separated brethren. Among these non-personal centres of authority we even find the philosophy of Karl Marx. This particular misdirection of loyalty must clash with loyalty to the Pope, for the Popes, who affirmed workers' rights clearly, also gave the first warnings of that political evil which has enslaved half the earth and slaughtered countless martyrs.

The turmoil will pass. On their pilgrimage, God's People receive the assurance of Hope, a grace which many Christian writers discuss today. When all is uncertain and change is called 'progress', for a visible sign of Hope we look to the living rock, the fisherman, 'our only link with Christ'. Worldly might, conformism, public opinion, money, these self-contained authorities are reduced to frailty in Christ's revolution of authority. 'But I am among you as one who serves' (Luke 22:27). Christ says this of himself. Of Peter and his successors he says, 'If any one would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all' (Mark 9:35). So Christians find Hope in looking to the 'servant of the servants of God'. We find worldly authority upturned by the sign of the coming Kingdom which is always within us. Hope is yet another way to an informed adult loyalty to the earthly representative of Jesus Christ, the Shepherd who serves, the Servant who suffers.

## THE LAST QUESTION

Pope Paul's wise advice has been followed. In the Gospels we saw the 'rock', Peter, and 'which meaning Christ has willed to attribute to this name'. The seeds of Infallibility have been disclosed, for Scripture reveals Christ as the authority of Truth. From this has grown a logical argument for his new authority, the Papacy. We have also found the Pope in his proper context, the college of bishops in the midst of God's People.

For those seeking to love Christ and hear God's Word, this quiet reasoning may answer such questions as, 'Is it true? Does it work? Is it necessary?' But there is one last question in the quest for credible visible Christian authority. With innocent justice young people ask, 'Is it good?'

A modern Pope answered this in his private journal, his personal response to Christ's words: 'Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these? ...Do you love me? ...Do you love me? ...Feed my sheep' (John 21: 15-18).

Our beloved Pope John XXIII wrote: 'There is great authority in these words: the investiture of the Pope with his task as universal shepherd, in answer to his thrice repeated assurance of love, an

assurance he gives to Jesus, who has deigned to ask for it with gentle insistence. It is love, then, that matters: Jesus asks Peter for it, and Peter assures him of it.

Peter's successor knows that in his person and in all that he does there is the grace and the law of love, which sustains, inspires and adorns everything; and in the eyes of the whole world it is this mutual love between Jesus and himself Simon or Peter, the son of John, that is the foundation of Holy Church, a foundation which is at the same time visible and invisible. Jesus being invisible to the eyes of our flesh, and the Pope, the Vicar of Christ, being visible to the whole world. When I ponder this mystery of intimate love between Jesus and his Vicar I think what an honour and what a joy it is for me, but at the same time what a reason for shame for my own littleness and worthlessness!'

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