

Why Does Church Need A Pope?

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The eyes of the world are currently focused on Rome, as yet another man comes from the ranks to take his place in the long white line of the Roman Pontiffs.

Thus the time is ripe to reassess, in the clearer light of modern scholarship, the dogmatic background of the Papacy, and to present afresh, in the hope of promoting Christian understanding and unity, the reasons why Catholics consider Papal authority to be an essential part of authentic Christian doctrine.

The new Pope will claim nothing more, and nothing less, than this: that he sits in the chair of Peter, the first Bishop of Rome, and is therefore the sole legitimate heir to all the official prerogatives once granted to Peter by Christ the Lord.

It is the Catholic contention that Christ instituted a monarchical Church, a society in which one man, as human as the rest of us, and as mortal as the rest of us, should none the less have from above the supreme power on earth to teach and govern us all.

If such was Christ's will and intent, then there can never be, among the faithful followers of Jesus, any question as to whether or not this monarchical structure of the Church should be retained. The loyal Christian can have no desire to tear down what Christ has erected, or to abolish what He has once established.

Thus, the problem of the Papacy turns out, upon analysis, to be the problem of Peter.

Was the impulsive fisherman of Galilee chosen by Christ to be the supreme authority in the Church? We who rejoice to be "Papists" believe that an affirmative answer to this question is dictated by a thoughtful consideration of the New Testament evidence.

In the four Gospels we find these four facts:

• Jesus did give to one man a new name, a name indicative of the basic position he was to occupy in Christ's Church;

• Jesus gave to this same man the "keys" of that kingdom of God on earth, to which all men are called, and of which all Christians are citizens, fellow-citizens with the saints;

• To secure the unity of faith among the brethren, Jesus prayed that the faith of this one man should never be defective; and

• When Jesus, the Good Shepherd, was about to leave our earth, He entrusted His entire flock to the care and rule of this same man.

Such, we say, was the mind that was in Christ Jesus with reference to Simon Peter; and the entire Papal system is naught else but the attempt to keep the Church, now and forever, as it was in the beginning, monarchical.

Back to the Gospels, then, we must go. There is no more urgent or fundamental question for Christians than this: did the divine Master choose one man to be the supreme authority in His Church?

My present task is to present the case for the affirmative.

New Name for Simon

The very first meeting between Jesus and Simon is recorded in the first chapter (verse 40-42) of St. John's Gospel: "Now Andrew... was one of the two who had heard John (the Baptist) and had followed him. He found first his brother Simon, and... led him to Jesus. But Jesus, looking upon him, said, 'Thou art Simon, the son of John; thou shalt be called Cephas, which interpreted is Peter.'"

That is all: the entire narrative of this first meeting of these two deals with nothing else except the names of Andrew's brother, one that had been given him only given, the other that was to be divinely bestowed. We notice first the unusual fact that Jesus knew Simon's name (and his parentage) without the formality of an introduction. Simon's flesh and blood did not reveal it to Him, for "He had no need that anyone should bear witness concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man." (John 2:25)

Yet Jesus was evidently not satisfied with the man's given name.

It was to be changed: the man was hereafter to be called Cephas, or Peter. Why such a name was to be his, was not stated at this first meeting; but especially in a Jewish background, the fact that the man's name was to be changed is worthy of note.

The first occasion in the Old Testament when a man's name was changed, was a momentous one in human history. It

was the time (Genesis 17:5) when the Lord God, having decreed to adopt one chosen people as His very own, changed the name of Abram to Abraham.

The new name, meaning "father of many" was indicative of the role this man was to play as the great progenitor of the Jewish people, who ever after gloried in the title, "the children of Abraham."

Similarly, in the New Testament, Mary was not permitted to exercise her maternal privilege of choosing a name for the babe's first fruit of her womb. Gabriel, God's messenger, specified that the child had to be given the name Jesus, meaning "I am the Saviour," as being itself significant of His historic mission.

Thus, the humble fisherman joins a noble band: like Adam, like Abraham like Jesus Himself, he receives a divinely-chosen name.

The name, which was chosen was the Aramaic name "kepha" which was already in use to indicate something, namely a rock. To the best of our knowledge, however, it had never been used as a proper noun to indicate someone.

When Greek speaking peoples were later admitted to the Church, the problem arose of conveying accurately to them the meaning of Christ's Aramaic expressions, this "kepha" among others.

Some solved the problem by coining a corresponding noun in Greek, "Kephala," to match the Aramaic "kepha" as closely as Greek grammar would permit. Later, this Greek noun was brought into Old Latin, which had no K, as "Cephas."

Others however felt that this first solution failed to convey the full meaning of Christ's words: so they coined a new masculine proper noun, "Petros," from the existing Greek feminine common noun "petra," meaning "a rock." And it is from this Greek word "Petros" that the Latin "Petrus," the Italian "Pietro," the Spanish "Pedro," the French "Pierre," along with our English "Peter," have come.

As a result, however, of the two divergent solutions to the problem of translation, some confusion arose in the early Greek-speaking circles as to the identity of "Cephas" and "Petros." To settle this confusion, St. John reported the words of Jesus to Simon. Thou shalt be called Cephas, and then added his own explanation, "which interpreted is Peter." All men would therefore know that Cephas and Peter were one and the same man.

Rock and Church

The most celebrated discourse of Jesus, rightly called the "Charter of His Kingdom," is the Sermon on the Mount.

The closing paragraph of this speech (Matt. 7: 24-25) contains a parable of "a wise man who built his house on a rock. And the rains fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat against that house; but it did not fall, because it was founded on a rock."

Consequently, when the divine Carpenter of Nazareth decided to reveal His intention of building a Church of His own, and when we have already heard Him give the name, Rock to one of His we are not surprised to hear earliest followers, we are not surprised to hear Him say: "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona... And I say to thee: thou art Peter (Kepha); and upon this Rock (Kepha) I will build my Church; and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it." (Matt. 16: 17-18)

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The Eternal City of Rome as seen from the dome of famed St. Peter's Basilica. The slender "Cleopatra's Needle" in the center of the vast square stands above the spot where St. Peter was crucified.

This passage is the only recorded instance in the Gospels where Jesus speaks of "My Church."

In view of the many copies of this passage that have been found, the nature of Christ's own Church, the passage has special importance. A thoughtful consideration of these words of the Master brings us to conclude that, in His mind, at any rate, His Church was to have two characteristics to distinguish it from all other religious bodies.

Against the mistaken notion, by no means rare, that Christ planned a democratic group, in which no one individual should be given greater position than his fellow-Christians, we find that Christ did actually select one individual, Simon, setting him by his official title of "Rock," to indicate precisely the important position he was to occupy with respect to the whole Church of Christ.

Christ's Church is a Peter-based group, a monarchical society.

A second wide-spread error is that of those who believe that, in medieval times, Christ's original building was so ruined as to become unfit for the spiritual habitation of decent men. Thus shaking their heads sadly over the ruins of what used to be Christ's Church, they decided to build for themselves and by themselves a new Church, using a new foundation which should be not a man, but a book.

Yet it is the book itself which tells us that Christ will ed His Church to be, not Bible-based, but Peter-based; and also that this Peter-based Church could never fall into ruin, that it was so solidly founded that even "Hell's gates" could not prevail against it.

Thus, when we are told that in medieval times, the Church once built by Christ on Peter became so corrupt as to cease to be "His Church," our faith rebels. He said: this could never happen; and we believe Him.

Christ's Church is indestructible; no human weakness, no diabolical force could ruin what was divinely built. This we mean when we say: "I believe in the holy Catholic Church."

Keys of the Kingdom

After having assigned him his basic position as the Rock on which the Church was to be built, Christ then said to Peter: "And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed also in heaven." (Matt. 18: 18)

His eminence consists in this: that he received alone what the others received only collectively. In this, he was preferred by Christ Himself.

Peter's Vulnerable Brethren

On the first Holy Thursday after the completion of the Last Supper, a doctrinal quarrel broke out within the apostolic band.

St. Luke (22: 24) tells us, "there arose also a dispute among them, which of them was reputed

to be the greatest. It was the first of many such disputes in the history of Christ's Church.

The reaction of Christ to the dispute will therefore serve as a model for all faithful Christians, since such doctrinal quarrels will always be with us.

When confronted with this dispute in His mystical body, Our Lord, like a good physician, applied "first aid" (verse 31), then (verse 31) diagnosed the ultimate cause of the disease, and finally (verse 32) revealed his preventive measures to forestall any subsequent relapse into the same sad condition.

The "first aid" given by Christ did not consist of some might exploit, in defining that "in Heaven all power is given to me" (Matt. 28: 18).

Herein it is important to observe that to Peter are given the keys, not of Heaven, but of the kingdom of heaven, which is not quite the same thing.

Popular folk-tale delights in picturing St. Peter at the parting of the waters, there emerging, as if to admit or reject man's prayer, that he leave our earth. These are no basis in Christ's words for such a view.

The "kingdom of heaven" which is spoken of here, is not the same as the "Church Militant," the Church on earth. No other interpretation is compatible with the latter part of the sentence, where the keys which are given are clearly intended to be used "either to bind on earth" or to "loose on earth."

Thus, what is given here is not some vague power to be used by Peter after his own death or those separated souls, seeking entry into God's heavenly home, but the supreme power of jurisdiction to be used by Peter here "on earth," over those individuals who, by their Christian profession, constitute the kingdom of heaven "on earth."

Before a month had passed the same power was granted to the apostolic college, when Jesus said to all His Apostles (Peter and the rest): "Amen, I say to you (plural): whatever you bind on earth shall be bound also in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed also in heaven." (Matt. 18: 18)

A simple comparison of Matt. 16: 19 with Matt. 18: 18 shows that the same power is given on the two occasions; it is nothing less than universal power of jurisdiction over the whole Church, with the promise of a divine ratification accompanying the human judgments carried out on earth.

But in the two texts, the recipients are different; for the power here given to the Apostles as a group (Peter and the rest) was first given to Peter as an individual. What the others received at Capernaum, and possess, only in union with him, he had already received at Caesarea Philippi, and possesses, independently of them.

The solution offered is ingenious, for it leaves room for both the divine and the human factors to cooperate to the desired result.

Christ could have frustrated Satan's attacks by praying for each of His followers, that his faith should not fail. In that case (and it would not have been above the divine power) every Christian would have been in-

fallible in matters of faith, each in his own way.

Yet such an arrangement would leave no room for the human factor of humble obedience and submission, a factor of no small prominence in the Gospel of Christ. Thus Christ decreed to pray for one man (I have prayed for thee), with a prayer so effective that the faith of that one would never be defective. Then, that one, the center of unity in matters of faith could become a source of doctrinal unity, and so of strength, in the rest.

Now we will show that Peter's prayer was also answered, in a fully just way. Christ intended that the one who, by his prayer, would not have compromised Peter to strengthen them.

Here then is the reason that Peter should never be a "second" in the one who, by his prayer, made strong from Christ to communicate his indefeasible faith to his brethren.

Even Satan could not pull the Rock through his power, for the whole of earth's salvation is at stake to the Rock.

Here, through the centuries, as doctrinal disputes arose, faithful Christians have ever looked for guidance to the Star of Peter.

Over fifteen hundred years ago, St. Augustine, the great

thinker of Christian antiquity, said of Rome: "when the reply has come back from there, the debate is over."

One Fold, One Shepherd

The last earthly encounter between Christ and Simon Peter is recorded in the last chapter of the Gospel of John (21: 1-19). Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, dost thou love me more than the others?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee." He said to him, "Feed my lambs."

Simon said to him a second time, "Simon, son of John, dost thou love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee." He said to him, "Feed my sheep."

Christ Himself was "the Lamb of God," of this did not prevent the Son of David, the Shepherd-King, from claiming to be the Good Shepherd. Similarly, while Christ was on the earth, Peter had been a member of that "little flock" which Christ had fed with the words of God on which every man lives.

Now, however, the time had come for the Good Shepherd to part from His little flock—the time then for Peter to be moved up to the shepherd's position.

And as the promise of the primacy had formerly been made to reward Peter for his profession of faith in Christ, so now the conferral of the primacy rewards his profession of love for Christ.

At the Last Supper, the Good Shepherd expressed His will that His sheep should forever constitute one flock, gathered together into one fold. Now, at this Last Breakfast, He who knew that sheep left without a shepherd tend to disperse and perish, expresses the obvious corollary, that His one flock on earth, should have one shepherd on earth.

He did not, then, so arrange things that each man should be his own guide, still less that the sheep should be free to decide for themselves whether one of their number should be chosen to lead the rest or not. He willed that His followers, be they little lambs or full-grown sheep, should be under the rule of one man. In so doing, he made the Church monarchical.

This His true Church understood from the beginning, and her whole history has been the attempt to keep it that way. God helping her, she can do no other.



St. Peter, Prince of the Apostles, first of the 262 Supreme Pontiffs who have ruled the Catholic Church of Jesus Christ. This statue is in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican.

SERMONETTE

Charity Is Not Her Own: 1 Corinthians 13: 5.
BY THE REVEREND MICHAEL J. BENEDICT
"What's in it for me?"
"Do others before they do you."

A disinterested "must have an angle" often greets the apparently good turn. These and similar sayings, though often used in jest, reflect the self-seeking common in our society today. This is another way of saying that giving in our time is often tainted: it does seek its own.

This selfishness is not always apparent. The spoiled child is easily spotted because he is simple and lacks subtlety. The selfish adult, however, cleverly clothes his selfishness with the raiment of righteousness. I'll give John a deep freeze—sotta voice, so I'll get that promotion. I'll be obedient and sweet to mom (not because she deserves it, so she'll let me buy that formal for the prom). But no matter how well disguised, it is selfishness and eventually causes havoc and disorder among men.

The stature of a man is measured by his love. If he loves little, he is small. If he loves only himself, he lives in a world of midgets.

Because love is the inspiration of all human effort, man's deeds are good or bad, great or small, significant or insignificant, according as they are conceived and born of charity or of selfishness. If man's love is universal in scope (that means loving God and everything else for His sake), His deeds are grand, good, magnificent. You are great if you love others; the greatest if you love God; little if you love self. "He who exalts himself shall be humbled."

To grow you must love, for "charity seeketh not her own."

Daily Mass Calendar

Sunday, October 26—Christ the King (white), Gloria, 2nd prayer, of 22nd Sunday after Pentecost, Creed, special preface.

Monday, October 27—Mass of the 22nd Sunday after Pentecost (green) except no Gloria, no Creed, VE.

Tuesday, October 28—St. Simon and St. Jude, apostles (red), Gloria, Creed, Preface of Apostles.

Wednesday through Friday, October 29 through 31—Mass as Monday; VE.

Saturday November 1—All Saints (white), Gloria, Creed.

Don't Forget To Turn Back Your Clocks

Daylight Saving Time will end this Sunday, Oct. 26, at 2 a.m. To be on time for Sunday Masses, turn the clock back one hour before retiring Saturday night.

All churches will be on Eastern Standard Time this Sunday. Forgetfulness will only mean you'll arrive an hour early for Mass.