



Power (part I). By Fr. Frank Latzko

“I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” Matthew 16:19

Power is a word we use and hear a lot. Texans know the power of nature. We speak of the power of politics; the power of the press; the power of religion. Power is a force of energy that moves, transforms, builds, and inspires... but power can also tear down, frighten, destroy, and deform.

Today, we focus on the first expression of power, on it's being a positive force of transformation and change for the better of life and culture. Next week... part two.

Why two parts? To have a clear focus and shorter homily that doesn't try to do too much.

Jesus asks a simple question as to who the disciples believed him to be and only Peter responded with the statement that is the bedrock of our religion and church: “you are the Christ, the son of the living God.”

How beautiful and simple.

Jesus made it crystal clear that the Father revealed this directly to Peter. The consequence for Peter? Jesus gave him authority to be the rock of the Church... and his authority comes with power... there's that word again. Yes, Peter has been given a new name to establish his purpose in the Church... Christ's Church, to be the rock on which Jesus will build His church. The authority over the Church and its power come from

Jesus and they are to be grounded in His teachings and example: “You know how the Gentiles use authority to lord over the people... it is not to be that way with you. You are to serve and be servants of this power.”

Peter and the power given to him has been handed down through those who have succeeded him by choice and election to the minister as Peter’s successor:

the Pope. The pope is the vicar of Peter, the one who represents Peter and his authority over the church. The power of the keys is given directly to Peter by Christ as a symbol of his authority in the church.

What do keys do? They open and close. They lock doors to unwanted forces of power (which is next week’s homily), or they open doors to mercy, humility, justice, joy, and all the rest of the fruits and gifts of the Spirit.

We all share in this power by virtue of our baptism. We share in the ministry of the keys and their power. You have the power, given to you by Christ himself, just as He gave Peter power, to be a force of change and transformation in the world. You can “loose” the forces of good in the world and use the keys to open doors of welcome, mercy, and love.

Peter as Pope is best in the Church when he conforms faith, shares in authority, respects the vocation of all, and uses the power given to him to move the Church in new directions, yet still grounded in truths that cannot change. Peter, the Pope, must use power to anchor us in faith and truth and to give the Church wings to fly, giving new expression to these truths.



The natural power of a hurricane destroys and kills. Human expression of power can do the same (again, next week’s homily). We are being summoned to harness the power given to us by Christ to build the kingdom, to work at bringing justice to the world, to create a parish where we “loose” on the world the spirit of love and mercy.

The terrible misuse of power by religious leaders, political leaders, parents, and anyone with authority must be faced... but next week. For next week’s gospel tells us in no uncertain terms what happens when power and authority are rooted in human ego and human power is divorced from its source: God.

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