



## Who has the keys?

**Read:** Matthew 16:13-20

In the gospel Jesus asks his disciples who people say that he is. Peter responds that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the living God. Following his profession, Jesus entrusts Peter with keys to the kingdom and primal authority of the Church.

For Catholics this passage signifies the institution of the papacy, when Jesus entrusted Peter with the keys to Church. The Church belongs to Jesus (Rev 3:7), but is entrusted to Peter (and the Popes) as stewards of his kingdom on earth. In the Old Testament the king would entrust the keys to his kingdom to his steward. These keys would be passed from one steward to the next (Isaiah 22:15-23). The steward did not own the kingdom, but was placed in charge and could exercise the power of the king in his absence. In the same way, the Church belongs to Christ, but is governed by the Pope, and the bishops. The Holy Spirit, in turn, guides them.

Aside from conferring the keys of the kingdom to Peter, Jesus also gives Peter and his successors the power to "bind and loose" (Matthew 16:19). The two are mutually exclusive. In Jesus's time, the power of 'loosing' and 'binding' referred to the legislative authority of the Rabbinic College. The Rabbis governed the Jewish people when it came to spiritual and disciplinary matters. Furthermore, the person who had the keys was given the authority to claim certain things lawful and unlawful. Jesus has given this same authority to the Pope and bishops, in order for them to govern the Church and make declarations on matters of faith and morals.

In a world where varying opinions, morals, and beliefs ambiguously cloud the truth, the Church, guided by the Pope, continues to stand as a rock that safeguards the flock of Christ against confusion and error. Upon this rock we stand.