

"And I say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. To you I will give the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou loosest on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

St. Augustine explains it this way: *"Those who build on humans say, I am Paul's, I am Apollos, I am Peter's. But those who build **on the confession of Peter** and the divinity of Christ say, 'I am Christ's, because **the church is built on Christ and not on Peter.**'"*

The rock upon which Christ God will build His Church is not Peter as a person, who denied it three times, but Peter's confession of faith, that faith revealed by God the Father, that Jesus is Christ, the Son of the Living God.

Christ is the foundation, the cornerstone of the Church, it is not Peter, but Jesus Christ himself. St. Paul says, *"For no one can lay any other foundation than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ"* (1 Corinthians 3:11). It cannot be the basis of the Church of a human being, but God himself, so that the words of Christ may be fulfilled, that the gates of hell would not prevail against her.

According to St. Isidore of Pelusium, Christ did not build the church on Peter, but on *"the sure recognition which Peter, influenced by Christ, rendered as a foundation and foundation"* (Letter 235, PG 78, 328C).

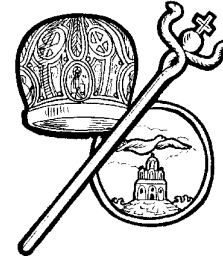
Those who also teach that Peter received the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven should reflect on these words of the blessed Augustine:

"Christ gave the keys not to one, but to the union of the church" (Sermon CCXCV, II, PL 38, 1349).



APOLOGETICAL CATECHESIS

IS PETER THE FOUNDATION OF THE CHURCH?



The Roman Catholic Church teaches that St. Peter was appointed by Jesus Christ as first among the Apostles and thus assumed all instructive, legislative, and judicial power over the visible church, and that St. Peter bequeathed to his immediate successor, the bishop of Rome, all his spiritual power.

They conclude, therefore, that the Pope, according to divine right, is the head of the visible part of the Church, is the Vicar of Christ on earth, and therefore is the authority of the Holy Bible, of Sacred Tradition, and therefore the salvation of the faithful is unthinkable without the Pope.

These teachings were proclaimed as dogmas of the Roman Catholic Church in 1870 A.D. during the First Vatican Council.

But, if we carefully study the history of the Church and the New Testament, we will see that our Lord Jesus Christ did not give St. Peter any primacy and infallibility, nor was the ancient Church under Peter's tutelage as if he were the first among the Apostles.

We shall also see that a belief in the supposed primacy of Peter cannot be concluded from the testimonies of the holy Fathers of the Church.

THE TESTIMONY OF THE SACRED SCRIPTURES

The Lord chose the twelve Apostles and ***gave them all equal spiritual power*** (Matthew 28:18-19).

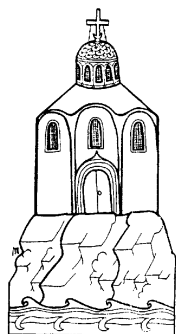
He breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit." (John 20:21-22).

And he made no distinction with Peter.



ORTHODOX ANSWERS 13





The Roman church teaches that Peter is the foundation upon which the church is built.

What is the foundation of the Church according to the Holy Scriptures?

St. Paul includes Peter in the foundation of the Apostles, without exalting him or distinguishing him from others, teaching that **the only "cornerstone" of the church is Christ**: *"Built on the foundation of the Apostles and prophets, Christ himself being the cornerstone..."* (Ephesians 2:20).

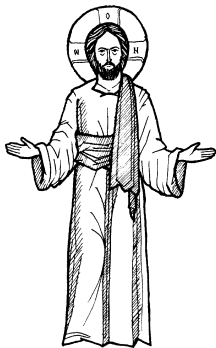
In the book of Revelation, no foundation of St. Peter is exalted, but it is said: ***"The wall of the city is set on twelve stones, bearing the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb"*** (Revelation 21:14).

Our Lord never speaks of a throne of Peter alone: *"Amen, amen, I say to you, you who have followed me in regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on his throne of glory, you also shall sit on twelve thrones"* (Matthew 19:28).

In the book of Acts, studying the quotation from the first apostolic council (Acts 15:1-30), we see that the Apostles Paul and Barnabas, upon arriving in Jerusalem (sent by the Christians of Antioch on the matter of those influenced by Judaism who demanded circumcision) **are received by all** the Apostles and presbyters of Jerusalem, **who meet as a collective body to settle the dispute**.

During the meeting St. Peter speaks as one among the Apostles as well as Saints Paul, Barnabas and James as well. The decision is taken collectively: ***"Then the Apostles and presbyters decided, in agreement with the whole Church, to choose from among themselves some men and to send them to Antioch..."*** (Acts 15:22).

The letter they sent to the Christians of Antioch testifies that ***the first Apostolic Church of Jerusalem acts under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, as a unitary body, where all are equivalent without granting absolutely any primacy to the Apostle Peter***.



Who is the Head of the Church? St. Paul, speaking of the Lord, tells us that: ***"Christ is the head of the body of the church"***, being the beginning, the firstborn among the dead, to be first in all things" (Colossians 1:18).

And elsewhere he refers to Christ as "Head of the Church" (Ephesians 1:22-23 and 5:23-24).

DOES CHRIST NEED A VICAR?

Our Lord Jesus Christ, being God and man at the same time, is the Head of the church and cannot be replaced by a mortal, who can be carried away by error and sin.

The Lord Himself has assured that, ***"And know that I am with you always, even to the end of the age"*** (Matthew 28:20).

THE TESTIMONY OF THE HOLY FATHERS

The Holy Fathers of the Church, unanimously, speak of the Apostles presenting them as equivalent to each other:

"Peter and John as Apostles and holy disciples are equivalent to each other." (St. Cyril of Alexandria, Letter 17, PG 77, 112B.)

"Without contradiction the rest of the Apostles were like Peter, sharing equally in honor and power." (St. Cyprian, De Unitate Ecclesiae, chap. IV, PL 4, 500).



St. Gregory of Nazianzus tells us: *"Though I honour Peter; yet I do not hear Petrinus (i.e., adept of Peter) and though I honour Paul; however, I did not hear Paulinus (i.e., an adept of Paul); I do not accept to be called by men, since I have become God"* (Sermon 37:17. PG 36, 301).

St. John Chrysostom says: *"The flock is on earth and the shepherd in heaven"* (Sermon II, 3).

Since the ninth century, the supremacy of the Pope in the West has been based on a biblical text (Matthew 16:15-19), which was erroneously interpreted:

