

Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time A2023

When people go in vacation, they leave the keys of their homes to trusted friends so that they take care of their house, their pets and their belonging. Keys to vehicles are given to people who have proven to be responsible drivers. Sometimes to one who has abused of trust placed in him or has revealed himself unworthy of it, I hear the words like, “give me my keys back”.

Thus, there is an undeserved trust and a deserved trust. A deserved trust is that which is given us because we have proven by our acts being worthy of it. An undeserved trust is that which is given us without us having proven by anything that we are worthy of it. It is a gratuitous act that is given us independently of our merits.

When our Lord tells Peter that what he said “not flesh or blood has revealed it to him, but his heavenly Father”, he points to undeserved trust. The Father trusts us independently of our merits and reveals to us the mysteries of the Kingdom that by ourselves we cannot know. The Father was the first to love us and save us in his Son Jesus. He is the one who puts into our hearts the desire to look for him and serve him. Whatever comes from us independently of him tends to nothing. Unless he helps us and instructs us, we remain ignorant.

The undeserved trust is the foundation of deserved trust for what is expressed outwardly as a confession of faith is inwardly the result of the gift of revelation that the Father has made manifest. When we discover the truth that the Father precedes us and, that in his mercy and generosity, he reveals to us the mysteries of the Kingdom, in spite of our unworthiness, it makes us humble and open to his grace.

In the name of deserved trust, which is preceded by undeserved trust, our Lord can tell Peter: “I will give you the keys to the Kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” So, Peter is established in the position of leadership to keep the Church in unity, truth and right teaching. He is given the charge of leading and defending the flock. He is made the rock on which the church is built while the foundation is our Lord himself. The leadership of the Church is part of God’s plan. That is why whatever might happen to the Church in human history, it will always survive, because it is not a human work.

The keys are the symbol of power and authority, administration and control over the matters of the Church. As it is in the case of those who go in vacation, the keys create responsibility and accountability. The power of the keys is a stewardship over the house of the Lord. It is an authority by delegation. It consists in being like a father ever ready to sacrifice his life for the good of his children.

To have the power of the keys is not an easy task. It requires vigilance, watchfulness and faithfulness so that the duty might be fulfilled in the spirit and according to the will of the Father. That task is continued today by our Pope and his successors. Our Pope and all those who lead us in the name of our Lord need our prayers.

Let me raise this question: How does it happen that many people could not tell the identity of our Lord while Peter found it? He succeeded because through his listening to and watching our Lord he had cultivated an intimate relationship with him. Thanks to that relationship, he had come to realize that there was more in Jesus than what people thought. It is like a wife whose husband has become an object of gossip in the town, she can stand and vouch for him: "I know this man; he is not what they are saying."

Of course, Peter's response was God's revelation. But, God reveals himself only to those who are eager in looking for him and wait for the sign of his presence. That is why it is important that we build a strong relationship with our Lord. Such a relationship is built through prayer, devotion, readings and meditation of the word of God.

The advantage of building relationship is that it makes us people of interior life, who, like the Blessed Mother Mary, ponder every word we hear from our Lord, rather than just being simple listeners who are not affected by what we hear. That is why I believe that we have to give a fresh and personal answer to the question of our Lord today: "Who do you say that I am"?

It is not a question of repeating an answer we learned from Catechism or heard from our teachers, but a response based on lived and personal experience of life. Our response will help us better understand the response of Peter and deepen our own relationship with our Lord. May we always yearn to build an intimate relationship with our Lord! May the Blessed Mother help us to imitate her by meditating in our hearts any word we hear from Our Lord Jesus!

Isiah 22: 19-23; Romans 11: 33-36; Matthew 16: 13-20



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