

# **Explaining the Papacy from Scripture and History**



# The Office of the Pope in Scripture

Definition: The Catholic Church teaches that the Pope is the successor of Peter, the **head** of the Church and is the universal **shepherd** of Christ's Church. The Pope acts with the **authority** of Christ on matters of faith and morals (not science, economics or physics) and cannot err (infallible) when declaring doctrine to be universally accepted by all the faithful.

The word "pope" is not found in the Scriptures because it is derived from the Italian word "papa", which means, "father." This is why we call the Pope, "Holy Father."

The office of the Pope, though, is found in the Scriptures as we will see.

## A. Primacy of Peter among the Apostles

1. Peter listed first among Apostles (Judas is always last)
  - a. **Mt 10:2; Mk 3:16; Lk 6:14; Acts 1:13** The names of the twelve apostles are these: **first**, Simon called Peter . . . Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him
  - b. Peter was not the first called, Andrew was called first by Jesus (see **Jn 1:40ff**), so this is a clue to his position among the Apostles.
2. Peter . . .
  - a. Initiates the replacement of the office (Gk. *episkope*) that Judas Iscariot has vacated. *Episkope* is where we get the word "episcopal" or "bishop" in English. (**Acts 1:15ff**)
  - b. Delivers the first sermon of the newly born church (**Acts 2:14ff**)
  - c. Is the first Apostle recorded to do miracles in the Book of Acts – heals a cripple, raised a dead person (**Acts 3:1-12**)
  - d. Was the only one to walk on water besides Jesus (**Mt 14:29**)
  - e. Peter's shadow heals (**Acts 5:15**)
  - f. Allows the first gentiles into the church (**Acts 10:1-48**)
  - g. Settles the issue of circumcision (**Acts 15:6ff**) "the multitude fell silent."
  - h. Peter's name is mentioned about 165 times in the Bible. The other Apostles combined is 130. The Apostle in 2<sup>nd</sup> place is John with 33 references.
3. The Catholic Church's use of "the chair" of Peter is the N.T. seat of authority
  - a. In the O.T. the seat of authority was the "chair of Moses" (**Mt. 23:2** Jesus said, "The scribes and the Pharisees have taken their seat on the **chair** (Gk. *kathedra*, Lat. *Sede*) **of Moses**. Therefore, do and observe all things whatsoever they tell you . . ."). This is where we get that a teaching is "ex-cathedra", or to be believed by all.
  - b. In **Mt 16:15-19**- only Peter is given the keys, a symbol of authority
4. Jesus prays specifically for Peter to "strengthen his brethren"
  - a. **Luke 22:31** "Simon, Simon, behold Satan has demanded to sift you (Gk. *humas* - plural) like wheat, but I have prayed for you (Gk. *sou* - singular) that your faith may not fail (Gk. *ekleipo* - eclipse); and once you have turned back, you must strengthen your brothers."

## B. Peter as the “Rock”

- a. You are Peter (Gk. *Petros*) and upon this rock (Gk. *petra*) I will build my Church . . . (**Mt 16:18**) The setting is in the visual vicinity of Caesarea Philippi. A massive wall of rock (200 feet x 500 feet) with a temple dedicated to Caesar on top.
- b. Simon’s name is changed to the Greek word “*Petros*.” The word “*Petra*” means massive rock and is feminine word, whereas, *Petros* is masculine. No one that we know of was ever named “rock.”
- c. *Petros* is not “small stone.” The Greek word for “small stone” is *lithos*. (**Mt. 4:3** The tempter said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command that these **stones** (*lithoi*) become loaves of bread.”)
- d. Peter is also called “*Cephas*.” (Κηφαß) *Cephas* is a transliteration of the word *Kepha* in Aramaic, the language Jesus spoke. (**Jn 1:42** Jesus said, “You are Simon you will be called *Cephas*” (which is translated Peter [*petros*]). See also **1 Cor 9:5, 1 Cor 15:5, Gal 1:18**
  - i. A change in name signifies a change in character and mission
  - ii. Abram (exalted father) to Abraham (father of a multitude) will someday be a nation - **Gen 17:5**
  - iii. Jacob (supplanter/heel grabber) to Israel (one who wrestles with God) and will found the 12 tribes – **Gen 32-28**
- e. God is “The Rock”. Yes, God is THE Rock (**Ps 18:2**), but others can be a rock IN the one Rock, which is God. (Abraham called “rock” in **Is 51:1-2**)
  - i. “you who seek the Lord; look to the **rock** from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug. Look to **Abraham** your father”
- f. “The gates of hell (Gk. *hades* – *sheol* in Hebrew) shall not prevail . . .” signifies that the Church will always stand and will not be overcome. Recall Jesus’ parable of the wise builder who builds his house on a rock and not on sand (**Mt 7:24ff**)

## C. The Keys of the Kingdom – a symbol of authority

- a. The keys signify the authority of a king over his kingdom.
- b. In Isaiah we see Shebna being replaced by Eliakim as prime minister (Heb. *al ha bayit*) in the house of David. David has been dead 300 to 400 years and the current king is Hezekiah **Is 22:15-20**.
- c. This office is one of continual succession as prime minister of the king and rules while the king is away, until the king returns.
- d. Jesus knew that He would have to leave the Kingdom on earth and, therefore, appointed Peter as the “*al ha bayit*.”
- e. Eliakim is to be a “father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem” (vs. **21**). Jesus, the king, appoints Peter as prime minister and we call him “papa,” which means “father” in Italian and translated as “pope” in English.
- f. Jesus, THE King, has the “keys” (**Rev 1:18, 3:7, 17**) and gives them to Peter his prime minister. (**Mt 16:19**)
- g. He shall have full authority over the kingdom. (“And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder so he shall open and none shall shut; and he shall shut and none shall open.” **Is 22:22**)

- h. Other Apostles also given the authority to “bind and loose” (*Mt. 18:18*), but no others are given the keys of the kingdom. The authority to “bind and loose” is a way to say that they have authority over the Church.

**D. Peter as the head of the church and shepherd of Jesus’ flock.**

- a. *John 21:9, 15-17* When they climbed out on shore, they saw a charcoal fire with fish on it and bread.
  - i. The only other mention of a charcoal fire is in *Jn 18:18* where Peter denied Jesus three times.
  - ii. Jesus asks Peter three times around this second charcoal fire whether he loves him or not.
- b. There are multiple types of “love” in the Greek. *Agape*, perfect love, *philos*, brotherly love and *eros*, erotic love, *pragma*, love in marriage.
- c. *John 21:15* “Jesus said to Simon Peter, “. . . do you love (Gk. *agape*) me more than these?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love (Gk. *phileo*) you.” He said to him, “Feed (Gk. *bosco*) my lambs (Gk. *arnion*).” He then said to him a second time, “Simon, do you love (Gk. *agape*) me?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love (Gk. *phileo*) you.” He said to him, “Tend (to pastor, Gk. *poimaine*) my sheep (Gk. *probaton*).” He said to him the third time, “Simon, do you love (Gk. *phileis*) me?” Peter . . . said to him, “Lord, you know that I love (Gk. *phileo*) you.” [Jesus] said to him, “Feed my sheep.”
  - i. Jesus says, “*agapas me, agapas me, phileis me.*” Peter says, “*philo se, philo se, philo se.*” Jesus meets Peter where he is spiritually. Peter is honest enough to say that he can only admit to the lower kind of love at this time. Peter will later receive the Holy Spirit and give his life for Jesus with agape love.
  - ii. Jesus is THE Shepherd (*Jn 10:11*), but Jesus is appointing Peter as the shepherd of His flock here on earth as his representative when he tells Peter to feed, pastor and tend HIS sheep.
- d. *John 21:10-11* Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish you just caught. So Simon *Peter went over and dragged the net ashore* full of one hundred fifty-three large fish. Even though there were so many, the net was not torn.
  - i. The other apostles brought the net to shore (vs. 8) collectively since it was so heavy that no single apostle could carry it.
  - ii. Peter alone brings the net on to shore, which would have been very heavy. This indicates the headship of Peter over the church, which is represented by the net full of fish. The 153 fish could represent the number of species of fish, which would symbolize that the church would include all peoples.
  - iii. The net (the church) was not torn represent that the church will endure even the most difficulties and distress that will befall her.

## E. The Succession of Peter

- a. The Church teaches that the pope is the Bishop of Rome and successor of Peter
- b. Jesus said that He would be with the church until the end of time. (*Mt 28:20*). There must be a “shepherd” to guide the Church to the end of time since Christ is not present on earth to shepherd the flock.
- c. *1 Cor. 12:28* “Some people God has designated in the **church** to be, first, **apostles**; second, prophets . . .”
  - i. The church is still here today; therefore there are apostles. Paul says in *Ephesians 2:19-20* that the family of God is built on the foundation of the apostles
  - ii. Apostles are present today because of apostolic succession.
  - iii. Apostolic succession began with the replacement of Judas Iscariot (*Acts 1:20*) “let his office (Gk. *episkopen*) another take.”
  - iv. Apostolic succession continues with the laying on of hands. (*Acts 13:3, 14:23, 1 Tim 4:14*)
  - v. Examples other than the 12 Apostles (overseers): *1Tim 3:1ff*- “if anyone aspires to the office of bishop (Gk. *episkopes*)”
- d. The office of the papacy can be traced back historically to Peter in an unbroken line of succession.
- e. St. Irenaeus in A.D. 150 said,

"Anyone who wishes to discern the truth may see in every Church in the whole world the Apostolic succession clear and manifest. We can enumerate those who were appointed Bishops in the churches by the Apostles and their successors to our very day, but as it would be very long in a book of this kind to enumerate the successors of all the churches, I will point out the Apostolic tradition in faith announced to mankind, which has been brought down to our time by the succession of Bishops in the greatest, in the most ancient and well-known church, founded and established by the two most glorious Apostles, Peter and Paul, at Rome . . . For to this church, that is the church of Rome, **established by Peter**, on account of her more powerful principality, it is necessary that every church should come together; that is, the faithful from all sides in which always that which is the tradition from the Apostles has been preserved by those who are from all parts."<sup>1</sup>

St Irenaeus then enumerates all the Popes until his time - Linus, Anacletus, Clement . . . Eleutherius (12<sup>th</sup> successor) [Interesting note: All of the first 30 or more Popes were martyred.]

## F. Peter's note of Succession (*2 Peter 1:12-15* and *John 21:15-19*)

1. Peter is talking to mature Christians who have the faith (*2 Ptr 1:1*)
2. Jesus is about to return to Heaven, so Jesus appoints Peter as shepherd of the flock and “shows” Peter how Peter is to die (*Jn 21:15-19*)
3. In *2 Ptr 1:14*, Peter will also soon be killed and leave as Jesus “showed” him; Peter is going to do something which will allow Christians to “always” and “at any time” be reminded of certain things.
  - a. *2 Pet. 1:14-15* “since I know that I will soon have to put it aside, as indeed our Lord Jesus Christ has shown me. I shall also make

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<sup>1</sup> Iren., *Against Heresies*. 3.3.1-3 (Book 3, Chapter 3, Paragraph 1-3)

every effort to enable you always to remember these things after my departure (Gk. *exodon*).”

4. How did Peter fulfill his promise? Peter imitated Christ and appointed a shepherd for the flock prior to his death. That successor was Linus mentioned in **2 Tim 4:21**.
5. See also a list of all the Popes on the internet. <sup>2</sup>

Some may contend that there is only one Shepherd, one Rock, Jesus Christ. The Catholic Church teaches that any place of honor or position is solely based on the headship of Christ. Because we have been baptized into Christ and have “put on Christ,” we can state the following:

<b>God/Christ is . . .</b>	<b>Others can be . . .</b>
The One Foundation – 1 Cor 3:11	Apostles are foundation – Eph 2:20
The Rock – Ps 62:2, 1 Cor 10:4	Peter is The Rock – Mt 16:18
The Shepherd – Jn 10:11	Peter is the shepherd – Jn 21:16
The One Mediator - 1Tim 2:5	We are mediators – 1Tim 2:1-2
The One Teacher – Mt 23:8	There are teachers in the Church – 1 Cor 12:28
The One Lord – Eph 4:4-5	Abraham as lord – 1Pt 3:6, Gen 24:18 (servant), Num 11:28 (Moses)
The One Judge – James 4:12	We are judges – 1Cor 6:2
The One Father – Mt 23:9	We are Fathers – Mt 3:9, 1 Cor 4:15
The High Priest – Heb 4:14; 5:10	We are priests – 1Pt 2:5, 9
The Prophet – Dt 18:18; Jn 6:14; Acts 3:22	There are prophets in the Church – 1 Cor 12:28
The Savior – Lk 2:11, Jn 4:42 . . .	“That I [Paul] might save some” – 1 Cor 9:22
The King of Kings – 1 Tim 6:15	The king of kings – Daniel 2:37 (Nebuchadnezzar)

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12272b.htm>

## Appendix A

Tertullian (A.D. 213)

Peter alone [among the Apostles] do I find married, and through mention of his mother-in-law. . . for the Church, built upon him, would for the future appoint to every degree of order none but monogamists. (on Monogamy 8,2)

St. Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 190)

On hearing these words [of Jesus], the blessed Peter, the chosen, the pre-eminent, the first among the disciples . . . (*Who is the Rich Man that is Saved?* 21,3)

Origen (A.D. 226)

Peter, upon whom is built the Church of Christ, against which the gates of hell shall not prevail, left only one Epistle of acknowledged genuinity. (Commentaries on John 5, 3)

Origen (A.D. 244)

Look at the great foundation of the Church, that most solid of rocks, upon whom Christ built the Church! And what does the Lord say to him [Peter]? “O you of little faith, why did you doubt!” (Homilies on Exodus, *Hom.* 5,4)

St. Cyprian of Carthage (A.D. 251)

And again He says to him [Peter] after His resurrection: “Feed my sheep.” On him He builds the Church . . . and although He assigns a like power to all the Apostles, yet He founded a single chair, and He established by His own authority a source for that unity. . . a primacy was given to Peter, whereby . . . there is one Church and one chair. If someone does not hold fast to this unity of Peter, can he imagine that he still holds the faith? (Treatise I - “*The Unity of the Catholic Church*,” - Cyprian’s first edition [4] )

St. Ephraim (A.D. 306)

Simon, I have made you the foundation of my holy Church . . . you are the head of the fountain from which My teaching flows, you are the chief on My disciples. . . . I have given you the keys of my kingdom. Behold, I have given you authority over all my treasures! (*Homilies*, 4,1)<sup>3</sup>

See also “*The Faith of the Early Fathers*” (in 3 Volumes) by William A. Jurgens

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<sup>3</sup> *Sermones in hebdomadam sanctum, diem resurrectionis et dominicam novam*, Lamy, Vol.1, pp. 399-566