



Matthew 16:13-19

When Jesus went into the region of Caesarea Philippi he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter said in reply, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus said to him in reply, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father. And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it. 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."

Introductory Prayer: Jesus, I believe in you. I believe that you came into this world to suffer and die to give me a chance at eternal salvation. I want to draw close to you in this prayer. May this time I spend with you be an expression of my love.

Petition: Help me, Lord, to enter into a deeper, personal relationship with you.

1. Identity Crisis: Jesus isn't interested in what "others" think of him. He wants to know what I think of him. The test of any relationship is how committed people are to each other. At some point a young woman will wonder, how serious is her boyfriend? After a few weeks of class, a professor wants to know, who are the serious students here? On the eve of battle a soldier might wonder, can I count on my buddies when the bullets start flying? Likewise, Our Lord wonders about us. What does Christ mean to me? Is he just a picture on a holy card? A dimly perceived do-gooder from the past? Or does he have a real place in my life? He is, after all, the Second Person of the Trinity who came into the world in order to save us. How does that truth affect my faith?

2. Heavenly Revelation: Peter professes that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah. And Jesus in turn tells him that this knowledge doesn't come from the world. It comes from God the Father. Recognition of Jesus as the Christ involves an act of

faith. Throughout history skeptics have tried to figure out Jesus, using just their reason and tools of research. But since when do we try to understand the totality of a person with reason? Learning about another person can often require personal contact, above all, listening to him or her. Do I try to listen to Jesus in prayer, in Scripture? Or do I simply try to "figure him out"?

3. Binding and Loosing: Keys were a symbol of authority. Our Lord had all authority on earth (see Matthew 28:18 and Mark 2:10). Authority implies the ability to delegate it; hence, Jesus gave Peter, as the first pope, the power to bind and loose, that is, to make disciplinary rules within the Church. A child who disobeys a licit command from its mother is committing a sin. Why? Not because Mom is God, but because Mom has authority from God. Authority, in this case papal authority, is not an imposition but rather a service. The Pope's unique authority gives us a sure guide on moral questions. The Pope doesn't have the power to make morality but rather to define authoritatively on issues at hand. How well do I know papal teaching? Do I make an effort to learn why he teaches as he teaches? When a difficulty arises, do I consult Church teaching? "Whoever listens to you listens to me. Whoever rejects you rejects me" (Luke 10:16).

Conversation with Christ: Lord, help me to love my faith as an expression of my personal relationship with you. Keep me from ever growing cold in my faith. Grant me a renewed appreciation for the gift of papal authority.

Resolution: I will read a few paragraphs of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, for example, a few about the papacy (880-887, 895, 1559).