

Why do Catholics submit to the authority of the Catholic Church and believe the Pope to be infallible?

Jesus told Peter he would establish his Church with him as the head, giving him "the keys of the kingdom of heaven" and telling him that "whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 16:18-19). The "keys" signify authority and appear in the book of Isaiah foretelling that the Messiah would have "the key of the house of David" (Isaiah 22:22) and later in the book of Revelation when Jesus himself says, "Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one; I died, and behold I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades" (Revelation 1:17-18). Jesus giving Peter the "keys" signifies his appointment as Jesus' representative on Earth, or Vicar. At the Last Supper Jesus told Peter, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail; and when you have turned again, strengthen your brethren" (Luke 22:31-32). Jesus' prayer that Peter's "faith may not fail" assured him of what Catholics call Papal Infallibility, the belief that the Pope is guided perfectly by the Holy Spirit when proclaiming a matter of faith or morals. After Jesus' Resurrection, he commissioned Peter to "Feed my sheep" (John 21:17), confirming Peter as head of the Church even after Peter's denial. Peter was also the apostle who following the Descent of the Holy Spirit, told those in Jerusalem to "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2: 37-38). Acts also demonstrates how the early Church listened to Peter to settle matters of dispute in the new Faith, such as the question about the necessity of circumcision for Gentile converts to Christianity. "And after there had been much debate" Peter made the final decision, while "all the assembly kept silence..." (Acts 15:4-12).

After Jesus told Peter he would establish him as head of his Church and gave him the power to bind and loose, he gave the same power to the other disciples. "Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 18:18). The authority of the Church, therefore, consists of the Pope and the Bishops united to him, represented by the disciples Jesus was addressing. We call this the Magisterium of the Church. Jesus told his disciples, "He who hears you hears me, and he who rejects you rejects me, and he who rejects me rejects him who sent me" (Luke 10:16) and before his Ascension, he commissioned all of them to, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the

Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age" (Matthew 28:18-20). He promised his disciples that after he ascended to Heaven, the Father would give them "another Counselor, to be with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him (John 14:16-18) and assured them, "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come" (John 16:12-13).

St. Paul confirmed that the Church was the authority of the Christian faith in his first letter to Timothy: "I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these instructions to you so that, if I am delayed, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:14-15).

(Isaiah 22:22; Matthew 16:18-19; Revelation 1:17-18; Matthew 18:18; Matthew 28:18-20; Luke 10:16; Luke 22:31-32; John 14:16-18; John 14:26; John 16:12-13; John 21:17; Acts 2: 14-21, 37-38; Acts 15:4-12; 1 Timothy 3:14-15; 2 Timothy 3:14-17)

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