

OT XXI (A), Homily, August 23, 2020 (Online Mass)

Isaiah 22: 15, 19-23; Psalm 138 (Your steadfast love, O Lord, endures for ever, do not forsake the work of your hands); Romans 11: 33-36; Matthew 16: 13-20.

We might call this Sunday "Power Sunday" because the main theme of all three readings is that God is the Source of all authority. God shares His authority with elected civil rulers to serve the people and with the Pope and the other Church leaders for the material and spiritual welfare of His children.

The first reading, taken from Isaiah, tells us how God hates unfaithful and selfish officials. He removed the proud "master of the royal palace" from his office, taking from Shebna the power and responsibility of which he had proven unworthy, and gave both to the humble and faithful Eliakim. The robe, the sash, and the keys are the insignia of this office.

In today's Responsorial Psalm (Ps 138), David thanks God for having raised him from lowly origins and given him authority as king over the people of Israel.

In the second reading, St. Paul praises God for the depth of His wisdom, knowledge, and correct judgments, asserting that He is the Source of all authority on earth and in Heaven.

Today's Gospel passage shows us how Peter confesses Jesus as his Lord and Savior and how Jesus, in turn, approves Peter's words and gives him teaching and ruling authority in his Church. Thus, Jesus establishes a "Magisterium" in his Church to serve the spiritual and physical needs of the Church members. By Jesus' statement, "I will give you the Keys to the Kingdom of Heaven," he gives Peter and his successors the power to bind and to loose (make laws; exercise authority) in the Church, and the assurance that their decisions will be ratified in Heaven.

Messages: 1) We need to accept and experience Jesus as our Lord and personal Savior. This means that we are accepting Jesus as our Good Shepherd, our Divine Savior and our Redeemer. Jesus should become a living experience for us – as our God protecting us and providing for us in our life's journey, loving us, forgiving us, helping us, and transforming our lives and outlook.

2) We need to surrender our lives to Jesus, our Lord and Savior. That surrender requires that we freely give all areas of our lives to Jesus and radiate to all around us Jesus' sacrificial love, unconditional forgiveness, overflowing mercy, and committed service. The joy, the love, and the peace that we find in Jesus need to be reflected in the way we live our whole lives. We also surrender our lives to Jesus by rendering humble, loving service to others with the strong conviction that Jesus is present in every person.