

## Brief on Papal Supremacy<sup>1</sup>

By Richard Joseph Michael Ibranyi

“And I say to thee: That thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose upon earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven.” (Mt. 16:18-19)

**Mt. 16:19. I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven:** St. Peter was the first Apostle to proclaim Jesus Christ as the Messiah. Hence Jesus rewarded him by decreeing that St. Peter would be the supreme visible head (the first pope) of God’s Catholic Church on earth. He would be the rock of the Catholic Church on earth and would be given the keys of the Catholic Church in which he would have supreme power of binding men to doctrines and against heresies and of binding and loosing disciplinary laws, judgments, and punishments.

Before Jesus’ passion and death, Jesus foretold that St. Peter would convert from his three-time denial of him and then would be the one to confirm the brethren and thus be the head of the Apostles and the Catholic Church:

“But I [Jesus] have prayed for thee [St. Peter] that thy faith fail not; and thou, being once converted, confirm thy brethren.” (Lk. 22:32)

Hence St. Peter was not yet head of the Catholic Church until he converted from his three-time denial of Jesus Christ. Therefore St. Peter was not made the pope until after Jesus Christ rose from the dead and St. Peter made his triple confession of his love for Jesus for his mortal sins against the faith for denying Christ three times, and when Jesus made his triple confirmation of St. Peter as the head of the Catholic Church when he told St. Peter to “feed my lambs..., feed my lambs..., feed my sheep.” (Jn. 21:15-17) The feeding of God’s sheep was always the task of the head of God’s Church, and thus this was the task of the High Priest during the Old Covenant era:

“I will save my flock...and I will set up one shepherd over them...he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd.” (Ez. 34:22-23)

More proofs of St. Peter’s primacy and supremacy over the other Apostles are as follows:

- 1) Whenever a list of the apostles is given in the Bible, St. Peter is always mentioned first. (Mt. 10:2-4; Mk. 3:14-19; Lk. 3:13-16; Jn. 21:2; Acts 3:1-2) It cannot be said that St. Peter is mentioned first because he was the first apostle that Jesus chose because St. Andrew was chosen before St. Peter. (Jn. 1:40-42)
- 2) The Bible mentions three occasions that Jesus took Peter, James, and John with him and St. Peter is always mentioned first: At Jesus’ Transfiguration (Mt. 17:1); when Jesus raised Jairus’ daughter from the dead (Mk.5:35-37); and in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mt. 26:36-38). And St. Peter is mentioned first among Ss. James, John, and Andrew. (Mk. 13:2-4)
- 3) Jesus Christ preached from St. Peter’s boat when other boats were available. (Lk. 5:3)
- 4) Jesus commanded St. Peter to pay the tax. (Mt. 17:23-26)
- 5) St. Peter was the only apostle who walked on water. (Mt. 14:28)
- 6) When all the apostles were sleeping in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus addressed St. Peter. (Mt. 26:40)
- 7) After Jesus’ resurrection, the angel told the women to tell “the disciples and Peter” about the resurrection and thus did not mention by name any other disciple. (Mt. 16:5-7)

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<sup>1</sup> RJMI’s Briefs are Long Commentaries contained in the end of *The Catholic Bible*, revised by RJMI.

- 8) St. Peter was the first apostle to enter the empty tomb while St. John waited for St. Peter to enter first. (Jn. 20:1-6)
- 9) After his resurrection, Jesus appeared to St. Peter before he appeared to any other apostle. (Lk. 24:34; 1 Cor. 15:5)
- 10) St. Peter was the first and main preacher on Pentecost Day. (Acts 2:14)
- 11) St. Peter called and presided over the appointment of an apostle to replace Judas Iscariot. That apostle was St. Matthias. (Acts 1:15-23)
- 12) While the other apostles were present, St. Peter passed sentence upon Ananias and Saphira for holding back their promised donations. (Acts 5:1-5)
- 13) St. Peter, and not St. John, spoke before the High Priest. (Acts 4:6-8)
- 14) In AD c. 39, God revealed to St. Peter that all meats could now be eaten under the New Covenant and that it was time to evangelize the Gentiles. St. Peter, then, by the command of God, baptized the Roman centurion Cornelius and his family. (Acts 10)
- 15) In AD c. 37, three years after his conversion, St. Paul went to Jerusalem to meet with St. Peter and not with St. James who was also present in Jerusalem. Hence St. Paul acknowledged St. Peter's authority over St. James. (Gal. 1:18-19)
- 16) In AD c. 42, Herod martyred St. James, son of Zebedee, at Jerusalem and imprisoned St. Peter, who miraculously escaped. St. Peter then made St. James, son of Alphaeus, bishop of Jerusalem and then fled and moved his See to Antioch. (Acts 12:1-3)
- 17) In AD c. 51 St. Peter, the head of the Catholic Church, was the first to speak and pass sentence at the Council of Jerusalem even though St. James was the bishop of Jerusalem. St. James also gave his judgment, which was the same as St. Peter's, and all the other disciples present consented. It was St. Peter's decision that was the deciding and infallible factor, as he was the head of the Catholic Church. However, there was never any dispute about the decision because all the disciples consented. (Acts 15)
- 18) In AD c. 58, St. Paul visited Jerusalem and met with St. James, the bishop of Jerusalem, as St. Peter was not present. (Acts 21:17-18)

There is only one God and hence only one faith, one religion, and one ruler of God's Church:

"One Lord, one faith, one baptism. One God and Father of all, who is above all."  
(Eph. 4:5-6)

"If he will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and publican." (Mt. 18:17)

"There shall be one fold [Church] and one shepherd [supreme ruler of the Church on earth]." (Jn. 10:16)

The only form of government approved by God is a hierarchy with one man ruling. This reflects God's hierarchy in heaven in which God alone is the supreme ruler with lesser rulers under him and lesser rulers under them. Any form of government that does not have one man ruling, causes, by its very nature, confusion, divisions, rebellions, revolutions, instability, and uncertainty. Jesus said, "Every kingdom divided against itself shall be made desolate; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand." (Mt. 12:25)

During the Old Covenant era, the High Priest was the pope and thus the supreme head of the Church on earth:

"[God] chose him [Aaron] out of all men living, to offer sacrifice to God, incense, and a good savour, for a memorial to make reconciliation for his people. And he gave him power in his commandments, in the covenants of his judgments, that he

should teach Jacob his testimonies and give light to Israel in his law.” (Eccus. 45:20-21)

Hence the High Priest had the power to bind and loose; that is, to make laws, bind men to them, judge men, punish offenders, and teach infallibly:

“The words of the wise are as goads and as nails deeply fastened in, which by the counsel of masters are given from one shepherd.” (Ectes. 12:11)

Even though the one shepherd might take counsel from many masters, it is his decisions that are binding. Likewise, during the New Covenant era the pope is the High Priest and head of God’s Catholic Church on earth. And Jesus teaches that his Church (his fold) will be ruled by one shepherd:

“And other sheep I have that are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd.” (Jn. 10:16)

In honor of the office, the High Priest was clothed in glory, which included “a crown of gold upon his mitre.” And he was called Holiness:

“And a crown of gold upon his mitre wherein was engraved Holiness, an ornament of honour: a work of power, and delightful to the eyes for its beauty.” (Eccus. 45:14)

“And thou shalt make a holy vesture for Aaron thy brother for glory and for beauty... Thou shalt make also a plate of the purest gold wherein thou shalt grave with engraver’s work, Holy to the Lord. And thou shalt tie it with a violet fillet, and it shall be upon the mitre.” (Ex. 28:2, 32-37)

If the head of the Church during the Old Covenant era was clothed in glory and called Holiness, how much more must the head of the Church during the New Covenant era be clothed in glory and called Holiness. The head of the Church is called holiness not because he is holy, even though he may be, but in honor of the holiness of the office. Hence the pope, like the Old Covenant High Priest, is the head of God’s Church on earth and therefore should be clothed in glory, wear a mitre, and be called “your Holiness.” And he, too, has the power to bind and loose; that is, to make laws, bind men to them, judge men, punish offenders, and teach and judge infallibly, even when many masters give him counsel, such as at ecumenical councils.

And there is an unbroken extra-biblical Tradition from the time of the Apostles onward that teaches the dogma of papal supremacy, as upheld by all the Church Fathers and popes from St. Peter onward. What follows is a brief list of the popes’ teachings. The quotes from Pope St. Anacletus to Pope St. Sylvester I are taken from the heretic Francisco Suarez’s work titled *Defence of the Catholic and Apostolic Faith (Defensio Fidei Catholicae et Apostolicae)*, AD 1613, Book 3, Chapter 15. For more quotes from the popes from Pope St. Sylvester I onward, see his book. Even though he was a heretic, he teaches the truth in this regard:

Pope St. Anacletus (76-88), the 3rd pope: “In his *Epistle 1*, he says that the Apostolic See is that on which Christ has founded his Church and therefore the greater causes pertain to it; in *Epistle 2*, he says: ‘We hold the reins of government of the Church’; and in *Epistle 3*, he expressly confirms and declares this truth, saying that ‘the Roman and Apostolic Church has from the Savior himself obtained primacy and eminence of power over all churches.’ ”

Pope St. Clement I (88-97): the 4th pope: “He says, ‘Accept our advice and you will have nothing to regret. For as God lives, and the Lord Jesus Christ lives, and the Holy Spirit... if certain people should disobey what has been said by him through us [popes], let them understand that they will entangle themselves in no small sin and danger... For you will give us great joy and gladness, if you obey what we have written through the Holy Spirit.’ ”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> First Letter to the Corinthians, Chap. 1, AD 91; D. 41.

Pope St. Evaristus (97-105), the 5th pope: “In his *Epistle 1*, he calls ‘the Roman Bishop the head to whom in doubtful matters recourse must be had.’ ”

Pope St. Alexander I (105-115), the 6th pope: “In his *Epistle 1*, he calls the Roman Bishop the ‘apex and head.’ ”

Pope St. Sixtus I (115-125), the 7th pope: “He calls the Roman Bishop the ‘head of all churches.’ ”

Pope St. Anicetus (155-166), the 11th pope: “In his sole letter he says that ‘to himself pertains all judgments of bishops.’ ”

Pope St. Eleutherius (175-189), the 13th pope: “He says the same in his *Epistle*, c. 2.”

Pope St. Callistus (217-222), the 16th pope: “In his *Epistle 1*, commenting on Matthew 16, he calls the church in Rome the head of all the whole Catholic Church, and that it pertains to it by apostolic authority to instruct the rest, and at the end: ‘For I am mindful that I preside over the Church under his name whose confession is glorified by the Lord Jesus Christ, and whose faith always destroys all errors.’ ”

Pope St. Anterus (235-236), the 19th pope: “He teaches the same to the bishops established in the province of Baetica and Toledo, replying to their consultation about the exchange of bishops. First he takes the occasion to say that Peter, whom he calls ‘our holy master and prince of the apostles,’ was transferred from Antioch to Rome for utility’s sake. And declaring that the same could be done in other bishoprics by apostolic authority, he subjoins: ‘These things, as you have requested them, though they are not unknown to you, we command to be observed.’ And at the end: ‘Therefore, brothers, stand and hold the traditions of the apostles and of the Apostolic See.’ ”

Pope St. Fabian (236-250), the 20th pope: “In his *Epistle 1*, he says ‘We are admonished by the divine precepts and the Apostolic Institutions that for the state of all the churches we keep watch with tireless love. Hence, it follows, you must know the things that in the Roman Church are done in the sacred rite of the Church, so that, following her examples, you may be found true sons of her who is called your mother.’ In *Epistles 2* and *3*, he says, ‘On this account by divine grace we have been advanced to the sacerdotal summit and established on a certain watchtower of the priests of God, to prohibit what is illicit and to teach what is to be followed.’ ”

Pope St. Cornelius (251-253), the 21st pope: “In his *Epistle to Cyprian*, which is the 46th among Cyprian’s letters, he relates that certain people, deceived by ignorance, made schism against him; but that afterwards, when they had realized the truth, they came to their senses in the following words, which he affirms are their own: ‘We know that Cornelius has been chosen Bishop of the most holy Catholic Church by the Almighty God and by Christ our Lord.’ And later: ‘Our mind was always in the Catholic Church, for neither are we ignorant that there is one God, that there is one Christ the Lord, whom we confess, one Holy Spirit, that there ought to be one Bishop over the Catholic Church.’ Which confession he himself so approves that he says: ‘Were we not moved by their profession?’ And later: ‘These letters we judge you should send to the rest of the churches.’ ”

Pope St. Lucius I (253-254), the 22nd pope: “His epistle to the West begins thus: ‘The letters of your love, which you have sent to the See of the blessed apostle Peter for reason of your business, we have gladly received.’ And afterwards he replies as universal pastor and makes disposition of many things.”

Pope St. Sixtus II (257-248), the 24th pope: “In his first epistle, he first says that he ‘presides over the Church in the name of him whose confession is praised by Christ and whose faith never deceives anyone but destroys all heresies.’ But later he adds that it is licit for bishops to appeal to the Apostolic See, ‘to whose disposition all the more important ecclesiastical causes and the courts of the bishops have, by the ancient authority of the apostles, of their successors, and of the canons, been

reserved; since bishops are held blameworthy who have done otherwise toward their brothers than it has pleased the Pope of the same See to be done.’ ”

Pope St. Dionysius (256-268), the 25th pope: “The like (as stated by Pope St. Sixtus II) is contained in Epistle 2 of Dionysius to Bishop Severus: ‘From the beginning we have from blessed Peter, prince of the apostles, received trust so great that we have the authority, by the help of the Lord, to come to the aid of the Universal Church.’ And afterwards he prescribes a division of parishes to be carried out and the norm given by him to be made known to all. ‘So that this precept,’ he says, ‘might not be special but general.’ ”

Pope St. Felix I (269-274), the 25th pope: “In his first epistle, he confirms that ‘the greater causes of the whole Church are reserved to himself.’ ”

Pope St. Marcellus I (308-309), the 30th pope: “His first epistle to the bishops of the province of Antioch thus begins: ‘Carrying the care of all the churches, according to the apostle.’ Which thing he pursues at large by confirming everything said above, and he adds that ‘no synod can be legitimately made without the authority of the Roman See.’ And these things may be enough for confuting the assertion of the king, for Marcellus lived up to the year of Christ 310; but for the greater evidence of the truth, we must at least run through the other three centuries following.”

Pope St. Eusebius (309), the 31st pope: “Thus begins his third epistle: ‘Blessed be the Lord our God, who by his mercy has dedicated his Roman Church to the priesthood of the blessed apostle Peter, and has conceded, by exchange of love, to show us the way that concerns us, because of the universal care which is ours on account of the privilege of the same church.’ ”

Pope St. Melchiades (aka Miltiades) (311-314), the 32nd pope: “In his epistle to the bishops of Spain, when saying that it pertains to himself to pass judgment on bishops, he adds: ‘For these the Lord has reserved for his own judgment, and this privilege he has committed to blessed Peter alone, the bearer of the keys and his vicar. Which prerogative has justly grown in his See, to be inherited and possessed by future times, since among the apostles too there was a certain discrimination of power.’ ”

Pope St. Sylvester I (314-336), the 33rd pope: “We can adduce the final canon of the Roman Synod established under him, which runs thus: ‘No one will judge the first See, since all sees desire justice to be moderated by the first See. Nor by Augustus, nor by any cleric, nor by kings, nor by the people will the judge be judged.’ And it was subscribed to by 284 bishops with some priests and deacons, and even by Augustus Constantine himself.”

Pope St. Damascus I, (366-384), the 37th pope: “We have considered that it ought to be announced that although all the Catholic churches spread abroad through the world comprise but one bridal chamber of Christ, nevertheless, the holy Roman Church has been placed at the forefront not by conciliar decisions of other churches, but has received the primacy by the evangelic voice of our Lord and Savior, who says: ‘You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it; and I will give to you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you shall have loosed on earth shall be loosed in heaven.’... The first See, therefore, is that of Peter the Apostle, that of the Roman Church, which has neither stain nor blemish nor anything like it.”<sup>3</sup>

Pope St. Siricius (384-399), the 38th pope: “We bear the burdens of all who are heavy laden; nay, rather, the blessed apostle Peter bears them in us and protects and watches over us, his heirs, as we trust, in all the care of his ministry... Now let all your priests observe the rule here given, unless they wish to be plucked from the solid, apostolic rock upon which Christ built the universal Church.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> *The Decree of Damascus*, Third Decree, from the Acts of the Roman Synod, 382.

<sup>4</sup> To Himerius, bishop of Tarragona, 392.

Pope St. Innocent I (401-417), the 40th pope: “In seeking the things of God...following the examples of ancient tradition...you have strengthened...the vigor of your religion with true reason, for you have acknowledged that judgment is to be referred to us, and have shown that you know what is owed to the Apostolic See, if all of us placed in this position are to desire to follow the Apostle himself from whom the episcopate itself and the total authority of this name have emerged.”<sup>5</sup>

Pope St. Boniface I (418-422), the 42nd pope: “The universal ordering of the Church at its birth took its origin from the office of blessed Peter, in which is found both directing power and its supreme authority. From him as from a source, at the time when our religion was in the stage of growth, all churches received their common order.... So it is clear that this church is to all churches throughout the world as the head is to the members, and that whoever separates himself from it becomes an exile from the Christian religion, since he ceases to belong to its fellowship.”<sup>6</sup>

Pope St. Celestine I, (422-432), the 43rd pope: “No one doubts, but rather it has been known to all generations, that the holy and most blessed Peter, chief and head of the Apostles, the pillar of the faith, the foundation stone of the Catholic Church, received the keys of the kingdom from our Lord Jesus Christ the Savior and Redeemer of the human race, and that the power of binding and loosing sins was given to him, who up to this moment and always lives in his successors, and judges.”<sup>7</sup>

Pope St. Leo the Great (440-461), the 45th pope: “But this mysterious function the Lord wished to be indeed the concern of all the apostles, but in such a way that he has placed the principal charge on the blessed Peter, chief of all the Apostles: and from him as from the Head wishes his gifts to flow to all the body: so that any one who dares to secede from Peter’s solid rock may understand that he has no part or lot in the divine mystery.”<sup>8</sup>

Pope St. Hormisdas (514-523), the 52nd pope: “ ‘Thou art Peter...’ (Matt. 16:18-19), whose throne holding the first place in all the world shines forth and holds its place as the head of the whole Church of God.”<sup>9</sup>

*For the glory of God; in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Michael, St. Joseph, Ss. Joachim and Anne, St. John the Baptist, the other angels and saints; and for the salvation of men*

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<sup>5</sup> Epistle 29, *In Requiritendis*, to the Fathers of the Council of Carthage, 417; D. 100; Jurgens reference, 29, 1.

<sup>6</sup> Letter to the Bishops of Thessaly, 420.

<sup>7</sup> Council of Ephesus, 431; D. 112.

<sup>8</sup> *Letter 10, to the Bishops of the Province of Vienne*, 445.

<sup>9</sup> *Libellus Professionis Fidei*, 517; D. 298.