

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

Thus says the Lord GOD of hosts, ‘Come, go to this steward, to Shebna, who is over the household, and say to him: “I will thrust you from your office, and you will be pulled down from your station. In that day I will call my servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, and I will clothe him with your robe, and will bind your sash on him, and will commit your authority to his hand. And he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. And I will place on his shoulder the key of the house of David. He shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open. And I will fasten him like a peg in a secure place, and he will become a throne of honour to his father’s house.”

THE WORD OF THE LORD

THE RESPONSE TO THE PSALM IS

*O LORD, your merciful love is eternal;
discard not the work of your hands.*

I thank you, LORD, with all my heart;
you have heard the words of my mouth.
In the presence of the angels I praise you.
I bow down towards your holy Temple.

*O LORD, your merciful love is eternal;
discard not the work of your hands.*

I give thanks to your name
for your merciful love and your faithfulness.
On the day I called, you answered me;
you increased the strength of my soul.

O LORD, your merciful love is eternal;

discard not the work of your hands.

The LORD is high, yet he looks on the lowly,
and the haughty he knows from afar.

O LORD, your merciful love is eternal;
discard not the work of your hands.

*O LORD, your merciful love is eternal;
discard not the work of your hands.*

A READING FROM THE LETTER TO THE ROMANS

Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!
How unsearchable are his judgements and how inscrutable his ways! ‘For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counsellor?’ ‘Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?’ For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory for ever. Amen.

THE WORD OF THE LORD

THE GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia.

You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church,
and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Alleluia.

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A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING
TO MATTHEW

At that time: When Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, ‘Who do people say that the Son of Man is?’ And they said, ‘Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.’ He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’ Simon Peter replied, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’ And Jesus answered him, ‘Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.’ Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ.

REFLECTION ON THE READINGS

It's been easier to talk to the Pope as he will go round greeting people after a general audience. Sometimes he will say a bit more. After my diaconate (1 year before priesthood) ordination we were invited to attend a private Papal mass at his summer residence. Two family members were invited but my Mum had gone to the Amalfi coast, remembering my dad's words that it was the most beautiful part of Italy. I invited two friends who were working in Rome instead, and after blessing me and praying that I would preach God's word he smiled and said, "Goodbye to your sisters". Sue blurted out 'we're cousins' The Pope smiled at me and mouthed 'no they're not'. Sue confessed to me she didn't know how to tell her mum she'd lied to the Pope. Like the Royals we admire even if not fully understand them and people do talk nonsense because they are discombobulated.

Peter and his successors are the rock on which the church is anchored. The final say in any discussion. The Catholic church has a definite view, a teaching that is universally held by all Catholics, even if they disagree with some parts. Our consciences are not bound to every line but we have to be sure we would be sinning if we followed the law in a particular case.

Pope John Paul II wanted an up-to-date catechism as a reference text, Pope Benedict a readable one called YouCat, meant for students but really for adults as well, there's a lot in it that most of us would not have known.

Peter's authority was given both to forbid and to encourage, Jesus said he had come to perfect the law not to change it. His emphasis on trusting God, living at peace with others to share in a loving and selfless way he passed on to Peter and his successors, supported by the apostles and in our time by bishop's, teachers and people in a way that is ever growing in consultation so that for example Pope Leo can write on his concern that AI be used for the good of all not just a few and as he is well informed his writing is widely respected.