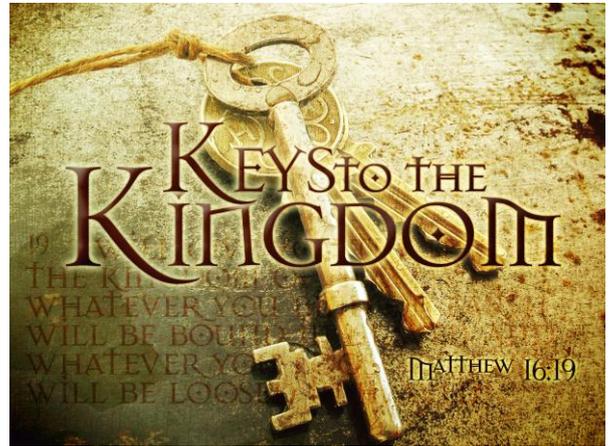


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THE TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY of the YEAR (A)

23rd August 2020

Dear Friends,

It is often said that 'the New Testament is the fulfilment of the Old Testament'; this sounds so intricate, so complex, that we don't often pause to think about what it really means.

Today's Scriptures, from the Book of [Isaiah 22:19-23](#) and the Gospel, [Matthew 16 : 13 – 20](#), make the above phrase really clear for us to understand, or to remind ourselves of this teaching.

[Readings for Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time 2020](#)

We read in [Isaiah](#) that Shebna is the master of the palace. And we hear the Lord saying to him, 'I remove you from your office, and from your post' – he has displeased the Lord. On the same day the Lord calls on Eliakim and says to Shebna :

'I invest him with your robe, gird him with your sash, entrust him with your authority; and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the House of Judah.

I place the key of the House of David on his shoulder;

should he open, no one shall close, should he close, no one shall open.

I drive him like a peg into a firm place;

he will become a throne of glory for his father's house.'

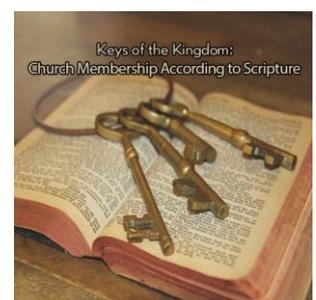
We know what the Gospel will be, don't we?!

Jesus is with his disciples and he asks them 'Who do people say that the Son of Man is?' Some say 'John the Baptist' ... 'Elijah' ... 'Jeremiah or one of the prophets' ... 'But you,' he said, 'who do you say I am?'

Simon Peter found within himself the courage to risk speaking out :

'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God'

Jesus replies to Peter :



**'You are Peter and on this rock I will build my Church.
And the gates of the underworld can never hold out against it.
I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven :
whatever you bind on earth shall be considered bound in heaven;
whatever you loose on earth shall be considered loosed in heaven.'**

Eliakim and Simon Peter, both given authority by the Lord ...
Both given the responsibility for the people of God ...
Both given a set of keys ...
Both told that any rules they set on earth will be observed in heaven ...
Both told that what they consider to be fair will be classed as fair in heaven ...
The Rules for the kingdom of God on earth
are identical to the Rules of the Kingdom of God in Heaven ...

It really and truly is how we live on earth that opens, or closes to us,
the gates of the Kingdom of Heaven when we die.
We can't presume that we will have another day, a 'tomorrow' to sort everything out.
The only moment we have is the present moment.
If you think that this is dramatic, think of those who were in good health, caught Covid-19,
and died ... think of those in road traffic accidents, who never reached their destination ...
think of the people who experiment with drugs, who die as they take their first dose ...
We don't have to give you examples, you have your own experiences
of those who have suffered a sudden death.

Eliakim was given Shebna's robe and sash as symbols of his new authority.
Eliakim had obviously lived a good and upright life,
otherwise he would not have been chosen to lead God's people with full authority.
In the Scriptures a sash was a sign that you were prepared to act as a servant to others
and to God.
Eliakim's authority was not an authority that allowed him to lord it over others.
No, Eliakim was in many ways being asked to serve the people of God,
just as Jesus would, in centuries yet to come.
The robe symbolized that a person is recognized as a person of righteousness,
a person of God.



*Our Queen wears beautiful, bright outfits when she is appearing in public,
so that people can 'pick her out' in a crowd; so that she is 'noticed'.
Not noticed because she is lording it over her people; rather, so that she can be seen by all
those who have come to greet her, either in person or as one of many among the crowds.
Remember that at the beginning of her reign she said : 'I declare before you all
that my whole life, whether it be long or short, shall be devoted to your service ...'
She too tries to emulate the service that Jesus showed His people.*

But, back to the Scriptures ... Can you imagine how Simon Peter felt
when he heard Jesus say:

... 'You are Peter and on this rock I will build my Church ...

... I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven ...

The Pharisees and Sadducees had been putting Jesus to the test and asking Him to give them a sign from heaven.

He warned people to be on their guard against their wicked ways.

The next thing we hear is Jesus giving Simon Peter full authority over His people, His Church.

Peter wasn't perfect... Peter had his flaws...

Peter had let Jesus down...

But, Jesus knew where Peter's heart lay;

He knew his focus ... Jesus knew what Peter wanted to do ...

The Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus made a tremendous impact on Peter.

We read of events that happened concerning Peter after Jesus had ascended to Heaven:

One day, Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, at three o'clock in the afternoon.

And a man lame from birth was being carried in.

People would lay him daily at the gate of the temple called the Beautiful Gate so that he could ask for alms from those entering the temple.

When he saw Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked them for alms. Peter looked intently at him, as did John, and said, 'Look at us.' And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them.

But Peter said, **'I have no silver or gold, but what I have I give you; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk.'**

And he took him by the right hand and raised him up; and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong.

Jumping up, he stood and began to walk, and he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. All the people saw him walking and praising God, and they recognized him as the one who used to sit and ask for alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple;

and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

Peter was just the right person to begin to form communities among the first Christians.

Like Peter, our lives can be transformed merely by listening to the Word of God and trying to act on it. This soon becomes our way of life ...

It will soon become the Way, the Truth and the Life of Jesus, seen through our words and actions among the people.

We began our Letter to you saying :

It is often heard said that 'the New Testament is the fulfilment of the Old Testament'; this sounds so intricate, so complex, that we don't often pause to think about



what it really means. It is our hope that the link becomes more obvious, and that you grow yet more in your love and exploration of the Scriptures, the Word of God.

Fr. Michael

Sr. Liz.

PS *Yes, it's time for another 'PS'!*

Watching a televised Mass doesn't suit everyone. We have been delighted to hear of people who, at their normal Mass time, sit down to read the Scriptures, and to pray. This is absolutely wonderful. Our enforced 'Covid - 19 lockdown' has deepened peoples' spiritual lives. This is a real blessing for them and for all whose lives they touch.

An update on Fr Michael ...

You may know that recently he spent time in Hospital with a Gastric complaint ...

He continues to improve day by day.

Day by day a little more strength returns to his body.

Day by day he feels a little better in himself.

He is not yet strong enough to celebrate Mass, or even to walk from 'The Sanctuary' to The Rectory.

Having had enforced rest this week, he hopes to be able to test his strength and stamina in the early part of next week.

Following this, we can hopefully announce a date when Masses can once again be celebrated in our Church.



'The Sanctuary' (*the bungalow at the far end of the Loyola Grounds*) has lovely views from the windows of the roof of the Church and its bell tower. We are not retired yet, but when we are, we know that

we can look to the Church
and to its bell to remind us
of our call, our vocation
to serve God's people ...
God's call is a call that never ends ...