

What is all this noise the Catholic Church keeps making about the Pope? Isn't he just some guy living in Rome? After all, Saint Paul called Saint Peter to task for his inconsistency at Antioch (**Galatians 2:11-14**). Bottom line, where does it say in the Bible that Peter was head of the Church?

Well, Saint Paul wrote to the Galatians about his need to correct Saint Peter on his personal behavior for not eating with Gentiles. Perhaps Saint Peter was being sensitive to Jewish Christians; perhaps he was behaving in a very human but very un-Christian way. Either way, Saint Paul wasn't asserting his authority over Saint Peter. In fact, Saint Paul even states in the same letter that he went up to Jerusalem to confer with Saint "Rock" (Cephas/Peter) for fifteen days and only met with one other of the Apostles (Saint James) at that time (**Gal 1:18-19**).

OK, so maybe Saint Paul didn't have it in for Saint Peter. But where does it say that Saint Peter was the head of the Apostles? The First Vatican Council cited Saint John's Gospel in its answer to the question of Papal authority.

"When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, `Simon, do you love me more than all of these?' He said to him `Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.' He said to him, `Feed my lambs.' He said to him a second time, `Simon, son of John, do you love me?' He said to him, `Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.' He said to him, `Tend my sheep.' He said to him the third time, `Simon, son of John, do you love me?' Peter was distressed that he had said to him a third time, `Do you love me?' and he said to him, `Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, `Feed my sheep.'"
(**John 21:15-17**)

This passage occurs between the

Resurrection and the Ascension. We see Jesus confirming Peter in his office as head of the Church. Confirming him despite Peter's denial before the Crucifixion! In commanding Peter three times to care for his sheep, Jesus makes clear Peter's authority over the whole flock.

Directly related to this passage, and giving it some backing, is the argument between the disciples as to who among them is the greatest. Saint Luke relates the story as follows:

*"Then an argument broke out among them about which of them should be regarded as the greatest. [Jesus] said to them, `The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them and those in authority over them are addressed as `benefactors'; but among you it shall not be so. Rather, let the greatest among you be as the youngest, and the leader as the servant" (**Luke 22:24-26**).*

So, how does this relate to Saint John's Gospel? Immediately after the passage above, Jesus turns to Saint "Rock" and tasks him with serving the others!

"Simon, Simon, behold Satan has demanded to sift all of you like wheat, but I have prayed that your own faith may not fail; and once you have turned back, you must strengthen your brothers"
(Luke 22:31-32).

Notice that Jesus doesn't make his command conditional on Saint Peter standing up for Jesus under questioning. In fact, Jesus tells Saint Peter that he (Peter) will deny him three times "before the cock crows this day". What Jesus does say is that Saint Peter must "strengthen [his] brothers" after he has turned back.

When does Saint Peter "turn back"? Well, take a look at that verse at the start of this article! As Saint Peter denied Jesus three times, so three times did Jesus

confirm Saint Peter in his role as leader of Jesus' flock. The First Vatican Council solemnly defined this truth as a dogma of the faith.

The Apostolic Church and Papal Authority

Catholic Evidence Guild of Guam
P.O. Box 7723
Tamuning, GU 96931
www.cegguam.org
tel: (671) -646-7176
email: catholic@cegguam.org