

GOSPEL PEARLS

The authority of Peter and his successors

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Now 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.” (Matthew 16: 13-19)

Peter's realisation that Jesus is God does not depend on his intelligence or on having learned it at university, since among the other apostles there were those who were much more gifted than he was in this sense. Yet this very fisherman, with the help of God's grace, boldly and determinedly affirms the Lord's divine origin. To Peter and his successors Jesus gives the power of the keys, that is, the power to "bind and loose" things on earth. At the top of the Church's leadership visibly is the pope, but invisibly it is Jesus Himself who guides, protects and supports His Church. This is why we do not fear that darkness will prevail because the Lord will never let her sink, just as He promised us.