

Keys are a symbol of lots of things for us, right? Keys keep things, and people, safe. Keys can represent the way in - or the way out. Keys represent belonging to a home or a workplace or perhaps a clubhouse. Keys represent authority - who gets the keys, who gives the keys, who opens the door and who shuts it. And keys also represent trust.

Eliakim was given that trust by the Lord. Peter was given that trust by Jesus. The "keys" given to them are not literal, but symbolic of all those things I mentioned: safety, belonging, authority, trust. The strings attached to those keys are connected to the very heart of God. It is like a mother or father handing over their newborn to someone to hold, precious and cherished beyond words. I always get a little nervous when I hold that baby - so delicate and so treasured. It is with that same care that we are to hold one another and all of the people of God. "What you bind, will be bound. What you loose, will be loosed ... take special care for these are my children." The keys do not give the Church the power to do whatever *it* wills, but to do whatever *God* wills. That's what makes the use of those keys so challenging and delicate.

St. Paul notes, "*Who has known the mind of the Lord or who has been his counselor?*" Only Jesus. As told through the Scriptures, he is the best revelation of the will of God we have. This Jesus who told the disciples not to tell anyone he was Christ, the anointed One, the Son of God - so delicately was that authority to be used. Jesus taught by his words and deeds, not by subjecting anyone to his power. Jesus' power was used to empower others, to heal, to raise up others. He did not shut doors, but opened them. He did not bind up people, but set them free.

Pope Francis, who in his turn, has been given the "keys" as a successor to Peter, noted this so beautifully in his document, "The Joy of the Gospel". He cautions that Church teaching must be used in such a way as to bring us closer to that freedom and joy of Jesus through love. Quoting St. Thomas he notes that the "precepts which Christ and the apostles gave to the people of God are very few." Pope Francis also notes that, even earlier, St. Augustine said that "the precepts enjoined by the Church should be insisted upon with moderation "so as not to burden the lives of the faithful' and make our

**religion a form of servitude, whereas 'God's mercy has willed that we should be free.'" That is why personal conscience - well-formed and discerned - plays such an important role in our moral teaching. Pope Francis also grounds us by calling for good example when he says, "We need to remember that all religious teaching ultimately has to be reflected in the teacher's way of life, which awakens the assent of the heart by its nearness, love and witness." This puts flesh and blood on our teaching, not something mandated but demonstrated.**

**We show pride in the faith we hold by living it out in our lives in all ways - we bind and loose, open and shut, by that example. In baptism each of us is anointed to live like Christ. We bear his name, Christian is our family. In baptism we are given the keys to the family home. Therein lies a deep trust that we will use them to welcome, keep safe, and, through Word and Tradition, example and love, teach the way of Christ.**