

Simon Peter #1

Hic Iesus Amoris Primatum Petro Commendat

Prōtos metax̄̀ isōn

We begin our story on Saint Peter (aka Simon Peter and sometimes just, Peter) with the story of his first encounter with Jesus:

⁸ But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." ⁹ For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the catch of fish which they had taken; ¹⁰ and so also were James and John, sons of Zeb'edee, who were partners with Simon. **And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; henceforth you will be catching men."** ¹¹ And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him. (Luke 5:8-11)

Little did Simon Peter know what he was getting into when he "left everything" to follow Jesus. In this Photo-Journal entry we was the beginnings of Simon Peter's journey of faith with Jesus. Let's recap what we already have learned about the man, Simon, whose name Jesus changed to the Peter.

- He witnessed his mother-in-law miraculously healed by Jesus.
- Jesus heals the paralytic in his house.
- He likely witnessed the healing of the paralytic at Bethesda.
- He listened to the Sermon on the Mount,
- He listened to the dialogue between Jesus and the Centurion's servant.
- He was afraid in the boat with Jesus during the tempest.
- He witnessed the woman with the issue of blood being healed.
- He laughed with James and John when Jesus said Jairus' daughter was just sleeping.
- He was there when Jesus fed the 5000.
- After Jesus' discourse on His flesh and blood being food and drink many of the disciples left. Jesus asks Simon Peter if he too would leave; he responds: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life; and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God."

That now brings us up to this Photo-Journal entry and the events in Peter's life with Jesus that we will focus on during this time of Jesus' ministry in Galilee.

Take Heart, it is I; Have no Fear

²² Then he made the disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. ²³ And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up into the hills by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, ²⁴ but the boat by this time was many furlongs distant from the land, beaten by the waves; for the wind was against them. ²⁵ And in the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. ²⁶ But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified,



saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out for fear.²⁷ But immediately he spoke to them, saying, "Take heart, it is I; have no fear.

²⁸And Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, bid me come to you on the water."²⁹ He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus;³⁰ but when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, "Lord, save me."³¹ Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, "O man of little faith, why did you doubt?"³² And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased.³³ And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God." (Matt 14:22-33)

"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."



¹³Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesare'a Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do men say that the Son of man is?"¹⁴ And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Eli'jah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets."¹⁵ He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"¹⁶ Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."¹⁷ And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven."¹⁸ And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it.¹⁹ 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."²⁰ Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ. (Matt 16:13-20)

The Church of the Primacy of Peter

In the late 4th century the Spanish pilgrim, Egeria, visited the area of Tabgha and wrote, "are some stone steps where the Lord stood." She made no mention of a church at this location, but history and archeology suggests that there was indeed a church here in the 4th century. It is believed that the large stone in the sanctuary of the Church of the Primacy of Peter is the stone that Egeria had written about. What was the significance of this stone? It is believe that this is the stone where Jesus served fish to his disciples after His resurrection (John 21). This large stone is called, the *Mensa Christi*, the Table of Christ. This story, however, we will take up later.

By the 9th century the church became known as the Church of the Coals, likely because of the coal fire that Jesus had built to cook the fish. Near the church chairs had been erected along the shore of the Sea of Galilee; these chairs known as the Twelve Thrones commemorated the twelve apostles. In 1263 the church was destroyed and it wasn't

until 1933 that the Franciscan order erected the current church which is known as the Church of the Primacy of Peter. This church commemorates both the events recorded in Matt 16 (above) and that of John 21.



Reflections

Jan's Reflection:

Peter played a unique leadership role in the formation of the early church. He was witness to many of Jesus miracles. And although he was impetuous at times he loved the Lord and knew who he was. Peter actually walked on water until he took his eyes off Jesus and feared the winds. We forget the he was the only disciple that trusted Jesus enough to believe he could do this. What faith!

Jesus used Peter's boat on a number of occasions. The boat is a type of metaphor for the church. Our Lord took Peter's boat out on the water and preached to the people on the shore. Another time Jesus told Peter to push out into the deep and let down the nets. There was a tremendous miraculous catch of fish and the nets did not break. I believe the Lord was revealing here that Peter would be a fisher of men and bring many to the faith.

After the Lord's discourse regarding his flesh and blood being true food and drink many of the disciples fell away. This was a very hard truth to understand and embrace. It would have been easy to stumble over Jesus words but Peter did not stumble. When Jesus asked him if he would go away too Peter replied, "To whom shall we go? You are the Holy one of God." It is interesting to note that Jesus hometown of Bethlehem means House of Bread and Jesus was born in a feeding trough--pointing to Him being true food indeed. Our Lord referred to Himself as Living Bread.

Jesus was always setting challenges before the disciples; especially Peter. When he asked the disciples "Who do men say that I am?, some of the disciples said, Elijah and others say John the Baptist. Peter had a different bold response and said, " You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.. He had just answered the most important question of the day. What a bold confession, based on a real revelation of Jesus. To this, Jesus replied, "Flesh and blood did not reveal this to you. Christ renamed Peter to *Cephas* (rock) and tells him on this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. He gives Peter the keys to the church and the authority to lead it.

After Jesus resurrection he again singles out Peter and asks him three times if Peter loved him. After all, Peter had denied the Lord three times. To each, Peter replied, Yes Lord, you know that I love you. At this Jesus told Peter to feed His lambs and tend his sheep. This is clearly the job of a shepherd.

Everything the Lord did prepared Peter to lead the church. Jesus was then able to continue His mission, His passion, and His going to the cross. When Jesus commissioned Peter to care for the sheep He also told Peter what he must too suffer and how he would die.

Kevin's Reflection:

Who do men say the Son of Man is? But who do you say that I am?

We read Peter's response to Jesus' questions earlier, and his response to the second question should be every orthodox Christian's response: "*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.*" For this reflection, I'd like to ask two similar questions, not regarding Jesus, but Peter. Let's begin with the first question:

Who do men say Peter is?

Why is it important that we ask this question? The answer is simple, because Christendom is largely divided on the meaning of Jesus' response to this question:

¹⁷ And Jesus answered him, "*Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.*" ¹⁸ And I tell you, *you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it.* ¹⁹ *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.*" (Matt 16:17-19)

Now, if you think this is a straight forward passage of scripture that everyone should obviously agree upon, well you'd be mistaken because upon this scripture rests the claims of the Papacy of the Roman Catholic Church. So let's

begin with what will be our “answer” to the question of, “Who do men say Peter is?” from the point-of-view held by Roman Catholics.

Who do Catholics believe Peter is?

Catholics believe that Peter held a unique status among the Apostles as declared by Jesus in the passage above and as further evidenced by additional scriptures as well as Church Tradition which we will be briefly discussing in this reflection. When Jesus asked his disciples, “Who do men say that I am?” they responded with a variety of answers that included Old Testament prophets and even included the contemporary, John the Baptist (who by this time was already dead having been executed by Herod). So it may be concluded that it was unclear to the people and perhaps even to the disciples just exactly who Jesus was at this point. Then when Jesus asked, “Who do you say that I am?” it was Peter who, through a revelation from the Father, connected the dots between all that he had witnessed and heard Jesus teach that He was indeed the Christ, the Son of the living God. With this declaration Peter stood out among the rest of disciples. And in the presence of the disciples Jesus gave Simon, son of Jona, a new name, Peter.

When God gives a person a new name it is a very big deal. God gave Abram and his wife, Sarai new names; He called them “Abraham” and “Sarah” signifying that they would be the father and mother of a great nation—Israel, the Chosen People of God. God also renamed Jacob “Israel” and in the New Testament Book of Acts we read how Jesus renames Saul after his conversion to Paul. God giving a person a new name signifies a new beginning and a redefining of the individual’s identity and ministry in God. Simon would be more than a fisherman, even more than a “fisher of men,” he would become “Rock” upon which Jesus would build His *Ecclesia*, His Church.

Most Bible scholars agree that the Jews in Israel during the time of Jesus spoke Aramaic. The Aramaic word for “rock” is *kepha* so Jesus’ declaration of Simon’s new name would have been spoken something like this (except without the English):

“And I tell you, you are *Kepha*, and on this *kepha* I will build my church...”

The point here is that Catholics believe that Jesus in re-naming Simon was linking the person (*Kepha*) and position (*kepha*—upon which he will build His church) into a single, indivisible personal ministry of Simon Peter. It is Catholic doctrine that upholds this linguistic understanding of the scripture affirming the uniqueness of Simon Peter’s place among the Apostles. While there are in other places in scripture where other disciples and even Jesus are referred to as “rocks” (*kepha*) and “small stones” (*petros*) only Peter is given the proper name of *Kepha* or *Cephas*. It must be understood that Catholic doctrine recognizes that Jesus is the true “Rock” that the builders (the Jewish hierarchy) rejected that has become the “cornerstone” of the Church (Psalm 118:22) so we need some clarification as to the proper role of Simon Peter as the “rock” upon which Jesus has been building His Church. To understand this we need to continue onto the next thing Jesus said to Peter and the disciples:

¹⁹ 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.”

To have a Catholic understanding of this scripture we must turn to Isaiah chapter 22, but before we do this I’ll give a brief backstory on the scriptures we’ll be reading. The “steward” or “master of the palace” was a very powerful position in the government of the Kingdom of Judah; in fact it was second only to that of the king. When the king was away it was the steward that watched over his kingdom and ruled in his stead. At the time of Isaiah’s writing the king was Hezekiah and his steward was Shebna. God was not pleased with Shebna and revealed this to Isaiah that He was going to replace Shebna’s stewardship with Eli’akim the son of Hilki’ah:

¹⁹ I will thrust you [Shebna] from your office, and you will be cast down from your station. ²⁰ In that day I will call my servant Eli’akim the son of Hilki’ah, ²¹ and I will clothe him with your robe, and will bind your girdle 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. ²² 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. (Isaiah 22:19-22)

There can be little doubt that the authority that Jesus was placing on Simon Peter was not kingship, but stewardship. In Catholic doctrine Peter did not replace Jesus when He was away (ascended into heaven), but ruled in His stead while the Church (the kingdom) eagerly awaits the return of her king and bridegroom. This also hold true for all of the “stewards” that would follow Peter through “apostolic succession.” And what about that term “pope?” The term “pope” comes from the Greek word *papas*, or papa or more formally, father. As we see in verse 21 of the above passage, *Eli’akim*, was also called “father” by the citizens of the kingdom:

... and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah.

Rock, Steward, Father, Pope... would all be acceptable names for the successors of Simon Peter, but in addition to these names we can add two more names for Peter whom Jesus called the “Rock;” both of these from the Gospel of John:

³ Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, ⁴ rose from supper, laid aside his garments, and girded himself with a towel. ⁵ Then he poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which he was girded. ⁶ He came to Simon Peter; and Peter said to him, “Lord, do you wash my feet?” ⁷ Jesus answered him, “What I am doing you do not know now, but afterward you will understand.” ⁸ Peter said to him, “You shall never wash my feet.” Jesus answered him, “If I do not wash you, you have no part in me.” ⁹ Simon Peter said to him, “Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!” ¹⁰ Jesus said to him, “He who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but he is clean all over; and you are clean, but not all of you.” ¹¹ For he knew who was to betray him; that was why he said, “You are not all clean.”

¹² When he had washed their feet, and taken his garments, and resumed his place, he said to them, “Do you know what I have done to you? ¹³ You call me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. ¹⁴ If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. ¹⁵ For I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. ¹⁶ Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. ¹⁷ If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. (John 13:3-17)

Jesus, who is Master, washes the Apostles’ feet. The Apostles, as servants who are not greater than their Master, “ought to wash one another’s feet.” And so this is true of all Christians, but especially for the Pope, who as the successor of Saint Peter for *...whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave.* (Matt 20:26-27) Therefore, the Pope is sometimes called “the Servant of the Servants of God.”

The second passage from John is also commemorated at this site at the Church of the Primacy of Peter. This event occurs after the resurrection of Jesus so we are stepping out of our normal chronological order that we have been following in the Photo-Journal thus far.

¹⁵ When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Feed my lambs.” ¹⁶ A second time he said to him, “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.” ¹⁷ He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Peter was grieved because he said to him the 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. ¹⁸ Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you girded yourself and walked where you would; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish to go.” ¹⁹ (This he said to show by what death he was to glorify God.) And after this he said to him, “Follow me.” (John 21:15-19)

It is the understanding of the Roman Catholic Church that it was at this time that Jesus conferred to Simon Peter primacy as the Shepherd of shepherds over His Church. The following two quotes are presented below to summarize the Roman Catholic position on Peter, which in turn, is extended to his successors, the Bishop of Rome—the Pope.

“The primacy was given to Peter directly and immediately. So the Church has always understood—and so Vatican I defined: “We therefore teach and declare that, according to the testimony of the Gospel, the primacy of jurisdiction over the universal Church of God was immediately and directly promised and given to Blessed Peter the Apostle by Christ our Lord... And it was upon Simon Peter alone that Jesus after his resurrection bestowed the jurisdiction of chief pastor and ruler over all his fold in the words: “Feed my lambs; feed my sheep” (from: *Pastor Aeternus*, Vatican I document)

“The primacy is a grace conferred on Peter and his successors, the popes; it is one of the basic elements of the Church, designed to guard and protect its unity: In order that the episcopate also might be one and undivided, and that ...the multitude of the faithful might be kept secure in the oneness of faith and communion, he set Blessed Peter over the rest of the Apostles, and fixed in him the abiding principle of this twofold unity, and its visible foundation. Therefore, the primacy of Peter is perpetuated in each of his successors: this is something which Christ disposed; it is not based on human legislation or custom.” (The Navarre Bible, Saint John, footnotes pp. 249-250)

Who do Protestants say Peter is?

There are many Protestant denominations, some say 33,000, others claim 51,314, but according to the World Christian Encyclopedia (who's credibility I cannot attest to) there are currently 9000 Christian denominations that would identify themselves as Protestant. Well, whatever the number is it is obvious that any attempt on my part to summarize a Protestant view as to "who Peter is" would at best be a gross approximation. Perhaps it would be better to try to answer the question, "Who do Protestants say Peter is *not*?" That's easy—he was not the first Pope!

This is not the place to try to have an in depth discussion on the causes and history of the Protestant Reformation. So lets keep it simple: the Reformers' objective was to have a clear break with the Roman Catholic Church and to do this they needed to delegitimize the Papacy and in order to do this they also had to delegitimize the claim of the Roman Church that Peter was the First Pope. To accomplish this the Reformers had to take a different exegetical approach to Matthew 16:13-20.

I discussed earlier the Catholic Church's teaching on Jesus' declaration to Peter:

And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. "And I tell you, you are Kepha, and on this kepha I will build my church...." (Matt 16:17)

Like the Catholics the Reformers also formulated their argument against Peter and the Papacy upon a linguistic interpretation. Essentially they said that while Jesus named Peter "Rock," the "rock" upon which His church would be built was actually Peter's confession, "*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God,*" and not Peter himself. Since I am neither a Bible scholar, nor a linguist with degrees in Aramaic, Hebrew, and Koine Greek I will not attempt to debate this issue. The question that comes to my mind is this: Did the Reformers interpret the scripture (Matt 16:17) objectively (exegesis) or did they impose a meaning upon the passage that they wanted it to have (eisegesis) in order to justify their separation from the Pope and the Catholic Church? [Eisegesis is the process of interpreting a text or portion of text in such a way that the process introduces one's own presuppositions, agendas, or biases into and onto the text. This is commonly referred to as reading into the text. ~Wikipedia] That is a difficult question to answer since it is next to impossible to ascertain the motives of those interpreting scripture unless they themselves admit to it. In any event, this was one approach the Reformers took to delegitimize Peter and the Papacy and it turned out they had a receptive audience of disaffected Catholics willing to adopt this new interpretation.

There were some among the Reformers who continued to recognize the special place that Jesus had given Peter with respect to Primacy over the other Apostles, yet they still sought to delegitimize the Papacy. To do this they formulated arguments against "apostolic succession." [Apostolic succession is the method whereby the ministry of the Christian Church is held to be derived from the apostles by a continuous succession, which has usually been associated with a claim that the succession is through a series of bishops. ~Wikipedia]. There is no single argument against the doctrine of apostolic succession, but the main three are as follows: (1) it's a historical fallacy, (2) it was invented by corrupt churchmen to secure power and control, and (3) there is no record of it in Scripture so since their *modus operandi* was *Sola Scriptura* (Scripture alone) there was no reason to retain this non-Scriptural tradition.

Who do Orthodox say Peter is?

The subtitle of this Photo-Journal entry was written on an outdoor altar at the "Church of the Primacy of Peter;" it reads in Latin: *Hic Iesus Amoris Primatum Petro Commendat* and translates as "Here, the Love of Jesus Commended the Primacy to Peter." This, as we noted earlier, is the Roman Catholic position regarding the events recorded in chapter sixteen of the Gospel of Matthew. The Eastern Orthodox Church uses a different phrase to describe their theological understanding of these same events, that is, *Prōtos metax̄ ἰσῶν*, which translates as "First among equals."



Hic Iesus Amoris Primatum Petro Commendat
"Here, the Love of Jesus Commended the Primacy to Peter."

To unpack the meaning of this phrase let's start with what the Orthodox mean by "equal?" First, to who was Peter equal? That is simple, the other Apostles. Second, in what respects are the Apostles equal to Peter? The Orthodox believe that all of the Apostles shared in the same *charism* that was bestowed upon Peter by Christ. This

means that each of the Apostles became the *rock* upon which Christ would build His Church. As evidence to this principle of a shared equality of the *charism*, the Orthodox point to the Book of Revelations:

⁹ *One of the seven angels who held the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came and said to me, "Come here. I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb."* ¹⁰ *He took me in spirit to a great, high mountain and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God.* ¹¹ *It gleamed with the splendor of God. Its radiance was like that of a precious stone, like jasper, clear as crystal.* ¹² *It had a massive, high wall, with twelve gates where twelve angels were stationed and on which names were inscribed, [the names] of the twelve tribes of the Israelites.* ¹³ *There were three gates facing east, three north, three south, and three west.* ¹⁴ ***The wall of the city had twelve courses of stones as its foundation, on which were inscribed the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.*** (Rev 21:9-14; emphasis added)

The Orthodox claim that the Church is founded not on one stone (or rock), Peter, but on twelve, the "twelve apostles of the Lamb." Furthermore, in regard to the *charism* of the "keys of the Kingdom" they believe that this too was bestowed upon each of the twelve Apostles *and their successors* through "apostolic succession." These successors would become the five patriarchs who ruled over Christendom during the first millennium of the undivided Church: Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem. The Bishop of Rome was accorded the title of *Prōtos*, that is, "first" among the five equal patriarchs of Christendom. The Orthodox understanding of *Prōtos* is substantially different than the Roman Catholic understanding of the Primacy of the Pope of Rome. This difference in understanding of the role of the *Prōtos* in the universal Church became a point of conflict between the Western Church centered in Rome and the Eastern Church centered in the Byzantine capital of Constantinople. This conflict eventually boiled over into mutual anathemas resulting in the Great Schism of 1054. As a result of the Schism the Orthodox East no longer recognized any legitimate claims of the Roman Catholic West and the position of *Prōtos* was transferred from the Pope of Rome to the Patriarch of Constantinople.

The "Chair" of the *Prōtos*, or Ecumenical Patriarch of the Orthodox Church, continues to reside in Constantinople, modern day Istanbul. The Ecumenical Patriarch does not have anything approaching the canonical power that the Bishop of Rome possess. He has no jurisdiction over the other patriarchs of the autocephalous or autonomous churches of Orthodoxy. However, he alone has the right to convene both Pan-Orthodox Synods as well as the extraordinary synods consisting of patriarchs or their delegates to deal with situations as they arise from time to time. Orthodox canons do not grant the Ecumenical Patriarch the authority to elect bishops outside of his own Patriarchate of Constantinople. He can intervene when issues arise between one or more of the autocephalic or autonomous churches; in such circumstances it generally involves calling for an extraordinary synod. The Ecumenical Patriarch serves as the primary spokesman for Eastern Orthodoxy and his moral authority is esteemed among those in Communion with the See of Constantinople. Thus, the role of the Ecumenical Patriarch is not one of having legalistic authority over Orthodoxy but as *Prōtos* He has been given the unique *charism* to promote and sustain the unity of Orthodoxy through love and service as the "servant of the servants of God."

The Orthodox understanding of Saint Peter and the his successors is a coherent development within their broader understanding of the Godhead, humanity and her salvation, and the Church. This is a deep dive, but one worth taking so let us begin with the Godhead. The Orthodox understanding of the Trinity is founded upon Holy Scripture, Tradition, Ecumenical Councils, and her life in prayer and worship especially as manifested in the Divine Liturgy. God is One in three Persons—Trinity. Each Person of the Trinity manifests the wholeness of the Godhead. Thus, when Philip asks Jesus, "Show us the Father," Jesus did not respond, "If you have seen me, you have a pretty good idea of what the Father is like." No, Jesus said, "If you have seen me you have seen the Father." In the Person of Jesus is the fullness of the Father. The same can be said of the of other Persons of the Trinity. This reality of the Trinity is a function of "personhood." The word "person" comes from the Greek word, "prosopon" which translates as "face." Face is both a noun, a human face, and a verb, as to face another. This captures the essence of personhood: a person is an existential reality by virtue of being in relationship with another. In the facing of one another the Persons of the Trinity are existentially One through Love. The Orthodox calls this Love between the persons of the Trinity, *perichoresis*. The theologian, Alistar McGrath, has explained *perichoresis* as that which "allows the [identity] of the persons to be maintained, while insisting that each person shares in the life of the other two. An image often used to express this idea is that of a 'community of being,' in which each person, while maintaining its distinctive identity, penetrates the others and is penetrated by them."

I have replaced one word in McGrath's definition, that is, I replaced "individuality" with "identity." The reason for this is as follows. God created humankind in His *image* and *likeness*, but of what does this consist? The Fathers of Nicaea stated that God, the Trinity, possesses a single "Divine" *ousia* (substance) in three *hypostases* (persons) and all orthodox Christians profess this belief when we recite the Nicene Creed. By creating humanity in His *image* (the *Imagio Deo*) the Creator gave us a "human" *ousia* and a nascent hypostasis or personhood, which in the fullness of time would manifest the fullness of all God had envisioned for humanity, that is, humanity would be "like God."

But, the cunning serpent, Satan, deceived man into believing that he could be “like God” through disobedience to God’s command and as a result humankind fell; and in turning his face away from God he became a “man without a face,” that is, *aprosopos*, a slave, to the primacy of self and his own lustful desires. Man became an individual. God promised to our first parents that He would send His Son through the “seed of the woman” who took on a human face so that our face (personhood), our relationship with the Trinity and one another be restored.

Essential to the salvation and restoration of humanity is His Church, built upon the “rock” foundation of the Apostles. It is in the Church that the baptized receive the fullness of graces, through Word and Sacrament, whereby our faces, our personhood, is restored in Christ. This is *Theosis*, the divinization of the human being through the salvific work of Christ in His Church; the restoration of our faces turned toward God and our fellow humanity. It is in the Church that the Oneness that Christ shares with the Father, the *perichoresis* of Love, is created within the believer and within the Church:

²⁰ “I pray not only for them, but also for those who will believe in me through their word,²¹ so that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me.²² And I have given them the glory you gave me, so that they may be one, as we are one,²³ I in them and you in me, that they may be brought to perfection as one, that the world may know that you sent me, and that you loved them even as you loved me. (John 17:20-23)

The *perichoresis* of Love that is the Church is a reflection of the *perichoresis* of Love that is the Trinity, and in Her eschatological fulfillment She is manifested as the Bride of the Lamb. Just as the Second Person of the Trinity, Jesus the Logos, has within Himself the fullness of the Trinity so too is this mystery manifested throughout the Churches built upon the rock foundation of the Apostles. In Orthodox ecclesiology each Patriarchate has within itself the wholeness of the Bride along with every church in union with its Patriarch (apostle). The same *perichoresis* that unites the faithful within the Patriarchate is also at work within the entirety of the Orthodox Church with the Ecumenical Patriarch who serves as an instrument of the Holy Spirit in promoting and sustaining this unity of love.

Who does Kevin say Peter is?

One cannot answer the above question without also recognizing the inevitable question that arises from this answer: “What is the proper form of Church governance that arises out of our understanding of who Peter is?” This is what the past few pages have been about, and it should be obvious by now that how a community of Christian believers answers this question profoundly influences the ecclesiastical government they form.

Most Protestants do not believe that Saint Peter was given any special *charism* over the other apostles, and neither do many of them believe in the doctrine of “apostolic succession.” They are therefore “liberated” from any requirement to address Christ’s words to Peter as to how they conduct the governance of their churches. This is not the approach of the Roman Catholic Church or the Eastern Orthodox Church who both recognize the special *charism* Christ gave to Peter, and in the case of the Orthodox, the other Apostles. However, as we read above their understanding of this *charism* is substantively different and so is their resulting ecclesiological governance.

So, “Who does Kevin say Peter is?” Perhaps a more appropriate question would be, “Who does Kevin think he is to even attempt to say who Peter is?” *Touche’!* I will say this, however, I believe there is beauty, truth, and goodness in both the Roman Catholic and the Eastern Orthodox understanding of the *charism* of Peter and the ecclesial governments that they have deduced from them. “Well, they both can’t be right, can they?” Yeah, I don’t know about this either; perhaps it falls under that domain of “coincidence of opposites” rather than the “law of non-contradiction,” either way; it’s not my job to resolve this issue either. If there is a problem with the governance of the Catholic or Orthodox church it may not be evidence of a flawed understanding of Peter or the resultant ecclesiology, it may rather lie in the reality of our flawed human nature, and that although the Holy Spirit is active in alive in these Churches He still must move through fallen human agencies—*Infallibility*, notwithstanding (but that’s another topic).

I have been Catholic and Orthodox (Protestant too, but on this particular topic that is less relevant); you could say that I have one foot in the West and one in the East. How did this come about? I read an encyclical by Pope John Paul II called *The Light of the East* and in it he discussed the gift of Orthodox theology, particularly that of their doctrine of *theosis*. This prompted me to study this theology as well as attend (with my wife and family) both a Byzantine Catholic Church and a Greek Orthodox Church for a number of years. My wife and I currently attend a Roman Catholic parish not because of any doctrinal complaints with the Orthodox, but rather because of logistics and some cultural obstacles. How can I justify this? In the encyclical John Paul said, “The church needs to breathe with both lungs.” I agree, but that’s probably not going to happen in my lifetime, so I decided that I would go ahead and breathe with both lungs even if I had to do it on my own. While the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox Churches are

working on lifting the schism they placed on each other in 1054 I'm not confident that they will resolve their differences regarding Saint Peter and church governance anytime soon. In the meantime, I will just breathe with my Catholic and my Orthodox lung and let the question, "Who does Kevin say Peter is?" remain unresolved. However, I am compelled to offer one caveat.

All that beauty, truth, and goodness that can be found in the Catholic and Orthodox responses to the question of "Who Peter is?" and their resultant ecclesiastical structures are dependent on the following questions: (1) "Has the mantle of Peter fallen on the right man?" and (2) "Have these men embraced this mantle with the same spirit as Peter?" (see 2Kings 2:1-15) I think I can simplify that into one single question: "Is it possible for the Church to have incompetent or even evil shepherds?" It is not necessary for me to answer this question because the Holy Scripture (and even Tradition) answers it for us by informing us of the great calamity caused by false shepherds, and the resultant judgment that will not only befall them, but also those who are misled by them.

The word of the LORD came to me: ² "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say to them, even to the shepherds, Thus says the Lord GOD: Ho, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep? ³ You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fatlings; but you do not feed the sheep. ⁴ The weak you have not strengthened, the sick you have not healed, the crippled you have not bound up, the strayed you have not brought back, the lost you have not sought, and with force and harshness you have ruled them. ⁵ So they were scattered, because there was no shepherd; and they became food for all the wild beasts. ⁶ My sheep were scattered, they wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill; my sheep were scattered over all the face of the earth, with none to search or seek for them.

⁷ *"Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: ⁸ As I live, says the Lord GOD, because my sheep have become a prey, and my sheep have become food for all the wild beasts, since there was no shepherd; and because my shepherds have not searched for my sheep, but the shepherds have fed themselves, and have not fed my sheep; ⁹ therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: ¹⁰ Thus says the Lord GOD, Behold, I am against the shepherds; and I will require my sheep at their hand, and put a stop to their feeding the sheep; no longer shall the shepherds feed themselves. I will rescue my sheep from their mouths, that they may not be food for them. (Eze 34:1-10)*

Zechariah was a prophet whose prophetic utterances spoke of "end of the age," and one of the "signs of the time" was the apostasy of the false shepherds who lead many of the sheep to suffer the same calamity that they would.

Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the one who is my associate—oracle of the LORD of hosts. Strike the shepherd that the sheep may be scattered; I will turn my hand against the little ones. ⁸ In all the land—oracle of the LORD—two thirds of them will be cut off and perish, and one third will be left. ⁹ I will bring the one third through the fire; I will refine them as one refines silver, and I will test them as one tests gold. They will call upon my name, and I will answer them; I will say, "They are my people," and they will say, "The LORD is my God." (Zech 13:7-9)

The verses from Zechariah 13 states that two thirds of the sheep will perish, and only one third will be left; clearly this is speaking of the great apostasy that Jesus spoke of in the Gospels. In the Olivet Discourse, Jesus describes in great detail the events that would take place at the "end of the age," and of His return. Included in these events Jesus describes a Great Apostasy where many would be deceived, fall away, and then persecute those who remained true to the Gospel:

⁹ *"Then they will deliver you up to tribulation, and put you to death; and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. ¹⁰ And then many will fall away, and betray one another, and hate one another. ¹¹ And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. ¹² And because wickedness is multiplied, most men's love will grow cold. ¹³ But he who endures to the end will be saved.... ²⁴ False messiahs and false prophets will arise, and they will perform signs and wonders so great as to deceive, if that were possible, even the elect. (Matt 24:9-13,24)*

Paul also warned the Galatians that the deception would come from an "angel from heaven," which we might suppose would be someone elevated in the hierarchy who is well received or where there is an expectation of obedience:

⁸ *But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we preached to you, let him be accursed. (Gal 1:8)*

This "angel from heaven" will teach people what they want to hear...

³ *For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own likings,* ⁴ *and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander into myths.* (2Tim 4:3-4)

... and not that the way is narrow into the Kingdom, but the “broad way” to perdition:

¹³ *“Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is easy, that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many.”* ¹⁴ *For the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life, and those who find it are few.* (Matt 7:13-14)

So what are sheep to do? First they must recognize that the Church is 24/7/345 under spiritual attack, and this is especially true for our shepherds:

³ *For though we live in the world we are not carrying on a worldly war,* ⁴ *for the weapons of our warfare are not worldly but have divine power to destroy strongholds.* ⁵ *We destroy arguments and every proud obstacle to the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ,* ⁶ *being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete.* (2Cor 10:3-6)

We must therefore pray for our shepherds. The second thing we must do is *insist* that our shepherds teach us the hard truth of the Gospel, and not to seek from them teaching to suit our own liking. The third thing we all need to do is “become our own first responders,” by this I mean that we take personal responsibility for the spiritual growth and development not only for ourselves, but also for our families. Read the Scriptures, study Church history, Tradition, and theology. When you don’t understand something ask your priest or pastor. Live the Gospel in church and out of church. Let it become part of your conversations with your fellow congregants, share what you’ve learned with others, and provoke one another to love and good works. (Heb 10:24) Be prepared to test everything, to retain what is good, and reject what is evil. (1Thess 5:21-22). We may very well be living in the times Jesus spoke about when He said, *“False messiahs and false prophets will arise, and they will perform signs and wonders so great as to deceive, if that were possible, even the elect.”* Are our shepherds prepared themselves and can we count on them to prepare the sheep for the days ahead? Don’t assume that the deception will be obvious. Consider the following excerpt from the Catechism of the Catholic Church:

675 Before Christ's second coming the Church must pass through a final trial that will shake the faith of many believers. The persecution that accompanies her pilgrimage on earth will unveil the "mystery of iniquity" in the form of a religious deception offering men an apparent solution to their problems at the price of apostasy from the truth. The supreme religious deception is that of the Antichrist, a pseudo-messianism by which man glorifies himself in place of God and of his Messiah come in the flesh.

Who does Satan want to deceive? The whole world, of course, but especially Christians, and he will use a religious deception that looks an awful lot like Christianity, but it will be off just enough to cause many to fall into apostasy. I remember a pastor once said, “Rat poison is 98% food rats love, and 2% poison”—that’s how Satan formulates his lies.

Where will it occur? In someone else’s church, right? Well, if Satan isn’t hitting your church with lies and deception its probably because he doesn’t have to bother with it. That’s a sobering thought, and here’s another from the Venerable Bishop Sheen for my fellow Roman Catholics to consider:

“The Antichrist will not be so called; otherwise he would have no followers. He will not wear red tights, nor vomit sulphur, nor carry a trident nor wave an arrowed tail as Mephistopheles in Faust. This masquerade has helped the Devil convince men that he does not exist. When no man recognizes, the more power he exercises. God has defined Himself as “I am Who am,” and the Devil as “I am who am not.”

Nowhere in Sacred Scripture do we find warrant for the popular myth of the Devil as a buffoon who is dressed like the first “red.” Rather is he described as an angel fallen from heaven, as “the Prince of this world,” whose business it is to tell us that there is no other world. His logic is simple: if there is no heaven there is no hell; if there is no hell, then there is no sin; if there is no sin, then there is no judge, and if there is no judgment then evil is good and good is evil. But above all these descriptions, Our Lord tells us that he will be so

much like Himself that he would deceive even the elect — and certainly no devil ever seen in picture books could deceive even the elect. How will he come in this new age to win followers to his religion?

The pre-Communist Russian belief is that he will come disguised as the Great Humanitarian; he will talk peace, prosperity and plenty not as means to lead us to God, but as ends in themselves. . . .

. . . The third temptation in which Satan asked Christ to adore him and all the kingdoms of the world would be His, will become the temptation to have a new religion without a Cross, a liturgy without a world to come, a religion to destroy a religion, or a politics which is a religion — one that renders unto Caesar even the things that are God's.

In the midst of all his seeming love for humanity and his glib talk of freedom and equality, he will have one great secret which he will tell to no one: he will not believe in God. Because his religion will be brotherhood without the fatherhood of God, he will deceive even the elect. He will set up a counterchurch which will be the ape of the Church, because he, the Devil, is the ape of God. It will have all the notes and characteristics of the Church, but in reverse and emptied of its divine content. It will be a mystical body of the Antichrist that will in all externals resemble the mystical body of Christ. . . .

. . . But the twentieth century will join the counter church because it claims to be infallible when its visible head speaks ex cathedra from Moscow [perhaps now Beijing?] on the subject of economics and politics, and as chief shepherd of world communism."

(Fulton J. Sheen, *Communism and the Conscience of the West* [Bobbs-Merrill Company, Indianapolis, 1948], pp. 24-25)

Now, more than ever we need shepherds who not only embrace the mantel of Peter, but do so with his spirit. It is in this spirit that I offer the following prayer to Saint Peter written by Saint Anselm:

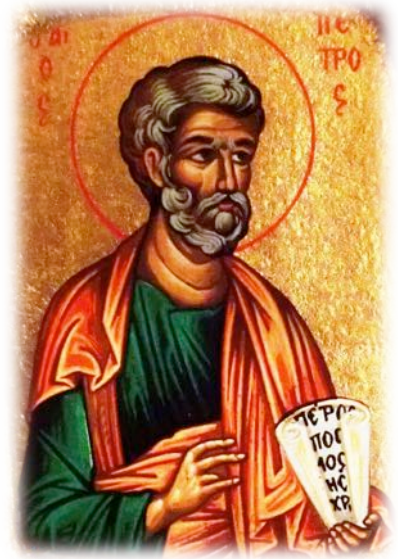
Anselm's Prayer to St Peter: "Shepherd of Christ, gather up the lamb of Christ"

Holy and most kind Peter, faithful shepherd of the flock of God, chief of the apostles, prince among such mighty princes. You are able to bind and loose as you will; you are able to heal and raise up as you will; you can give the kingdom of heaven to whom you will. Great Peter, rich with so many and such great gifts, high in so many and such great dignities, here am I, the poorest and weakest of men, surrounded by many difficulties and hardships. In my misery I need the help of your power and kindness, but I have no words to express my need as it really is, and my love is not great enough to reach up from such a depth as mine to such a height as yours.

Again and again I try to shake the lethargy from my mind, to prevent my thoughts from being scattered among vanities, but when I have gathered together all my strength I am not able to break out of the shadows of the torpor that holds me because of the filth of my sins. Nor do I have the strength to remain for long of the same mind. I am the most wretched of wretches. It really is so, it is not pretence, it is true. Who is there to help a wretch who has not the strength to express his trouble in words or show the sorrow of his heart?

O great Peter, if the cry of my trouble does not come up as far as you, let the care of your goodness come down as far as me! Shatter my hardness, shine on my darkness, look upon my wretchedness. Have a care, kind shepherd, for the lamb of the flock committed unto you, and have mercy on the misery in which he toils. Do not make demands according to his wickedness, but make allowance according to his prayer...

Remember that Christ asked you three times if you loved him, and when three times you confessed it he said to you,



"Feed my sheep." He is indeed a lover of the sheep who thus sifts the love of the shepherd before committing them to him. When you had confessed that you loved him, then he confided his sheep to you. How, then, can his shepherd spurn his sheep? Peter, shepherd of Christ, gather up the lamb of Christ. Your Lord sought and found him, and bore him on his shoulders, rejoicing; do not repel him now he comes back and prays. The Lord bought him with his own blood before he was born; Christ's shepherd should not value him lightly now he is reborn and so diligently commended to him. Alas, how long shall I not know that I am received, healed, cherished?

See, here is a soul needing mercy, and here is the merciful apostle Peter before the God of mercy, who had mercy upon the apostle Peter and taught him what to do and gave him power to do it. See, here is misery, and there is mercy, the mercy of God and his apostle Peter, and a soul in misery, confiding in God, and calling upon God and his apostle Peter. O God, and you his greatest apostle, is this misery of mine so huge that it cannot be met by the wideness of your mercy? Or if it can, but will not, what is the enormity of my guilt that exceeds the multitude of your mercies?

Is it that I have not confessed the whole of my sin? Truly, I have confessed all I know of my sins. Or is it because I do not make amends by sufficient penitance? Or because the good in me does not equal the bad? I acknowledge that all this is true, but this is the very misery by which I am tormented. Is it true, then, that the more I am oppressed by misery, the more mercy will tarry? That is an unheard-of word from one who is merciful to one who prays...

St Peter, prince of the apostles, by the mercy shown you and the power given you, loose my chains, heal my wounds. Free me from the misery of the kingdom of sin, and lead me into the bliss of the kingdom of heaven, where rejoicing with you I may give thanks and praise God forever. Amen.