

One New York cab arrived at the pearly gate where St. Peter was standing with his big key to open the gate to heaven. Just behind him the cab driver arrived a Catholic priest. St. Peter punched a few keys of his supercomputer and gave the cab driver a golden key and said it is a key to a mansion in heaven. The priest was thinking that if the cab driver got such a mansion then certainly, he is going to get a better deal. Maybe a big palace, well St. Peter looked at the priest and punched a few keys in his computer and said, "Well Father, I will allow you to go inside here is a key to a small hut in heaven. The priest was very much surprised, and he protested, "St. Peter, your computer may be making some mistakes. Remember, I am a priest. I have left everything to preach the good news. You gave that cab driver a mansion. Surely I rate higher than a cabby." St. Peter responded, " Sorry, Father! Here we go by results. When the cabby drove his taxi in the crowded streets of New York, people prayed and remembered God, but, when you preached, people slept."

This is one of the many humorous stories about St. Peter and the pearly Gates. allowing some people in, and others not. All these are based on the section of the Gospel we heard today – handing over of the keys to Peter representing the power and authority in the Church and in the kingdom to open and shut.

In biblical times, giving of keys symbolized giving of power and authority. This Sunday we are presented with two figures who are given keys.

The first is Eliakim. Eliakim was the secretary to Shebna the Master of King Hezekiah's palace back in the 8th century before Christ. According the first reading from Isaiah, Shebna lost favor with the Lord and was replaced by Eliakim. Isaiah goes on to say that God placed the keys of the Kingdom on Eliakim's shoulder. He would be Master of the Palace and the one through whom others would have to go to get access to the King.

The Gospel reading presents Peter as receiving the keys of the Kingdom of God. Like Eliakim, he would determine who has access to the King. Peter is usually pictured as carrying large keys, representing the authority given to him by the Lord.

Above the sanctuary of Saint Peter's basilica in Rome, written in huge lettering of gold mosaic, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church. I will give to you the keys of the kingdom of heaven."

These words from today's Gospel are held by Catholics as the basis for the papacy, applying to the bishop of Rome as the successor to Peter. Our Non-Catholic Christians, our brethren who do not accept the Pope interpret it differently after they got separated from the Catholic church.

But, the Catholic Church teaches that power authority is given to Peter through the symbolism of keys, and it has descended to all the Bishops of Rome throughout all ages, and that it exists today in Pope Francis, who, as the direct successor of Peter, is the head of the Church and the Bishop of Rome.

The Catholic Church further teaches that by giving Peter the "keys" along with the promise that all his decisions would be ratified in heaven, Christ gave him the power of freedom from error when he was officially teaching the universal Church. In other words, Peter received primacy in the Church and the gift of infallibility in his official teaching on matters of faith and morals.

Infallibility means that when Our Holy Father, the Pope, officially teaches on matters of faith or morals he is free from any error.

Jesus is the foundation stone on which the Church is founded but Our Holy Father, the Pope, the successor of Peter is the visible human head of the Church on earth. "You are Kepha and on this Kepha I will build my Church."

If Peter is Kepha the founding rock, then we all are pieces of stones with which the church is built.

Just like Peter, we all need to have a profound profession of faith, in order to get our own keys either to a big mansion or hut in heaven.