**“God Establish Stability and Continuity by Sharing of Authority”**

All our readings today point us to the phrase, ***“God Establishes Stability and Continuity by Sharing of His Authority.”*** God’s plan cannot be foiled by anyone who does not follow His commandments. God uproots those He puts in charge who do not do His will. He will remove them and put those who will do His will, so His plan for our salvation would be carried out.

In our first reading, in a humanistic setting of a kingdom, we heard about how Shebna the scribe who was put as the master of the palace was removed by God. God removed him because Shebna abused the office entrusted to him. He was replaced by Eliakim. Eliakim was given the key to the house of David. The key is a sign of authority. Through Prophet Isaiah, God foretold that the key to David’s kingdom would be removed and given to a new master.

So, God’s authority was removed from Shebna and given to Eliakim. God said Eliakim’s office would be that of a fatherly figure to his people. Eliakim was given the authority to open doors and shut doors which means, nobody should question is authority because it comes from God. His office which comes from God shall be a place of honor for his family members and those who would come after him. Therefore, there will be continuity and stability in the mission of God.

As we know, in the Old Testament (Hebrew Bible,) God used what happened to the Jewish people as prophesy of what would happen in the New Testament. So, He shared with us what would happen in the future by inserting prophesies concerning the future into the history of the lives of the Jews. That is why what happens in the New Testament is hidden in the Old Testament and what happens in the New Testament, reveals to us what was hidden in the Old Testament. God used the story of the Jews in the Old Testament to reveal Himself to us.

Our second reading talks about the depth of God’s riches, wisdom and knowledge. It is futile for us to second guess God because He is the source of all wisdom, knowledge, riches and He would always be right. Instead, we should surrender our heart, mind, strength to Him. We should always let God lead us and we should follow whatever He has commanded us to do. Whenever, we think that He is wrong by questioning Him, we should know that He is always right. He is our God who knows all things.

Whenever we wonder if God is wrong, it is then that He is showing mercy to everyone. His mercy is always directed towards the salvation of both the Jews and Gentiles. He is our God who is rich in mercy. His judgment and His ways would lead us to eternal life while our ways and judgment would lead us to eternal damnation. We should rejoice to know our God’s ways and actions are unquestionable.

In our Gospel reading, Jesus in His infinite wisdom, put us in a setting in Caesarea Philippi, a City built by Prince Phillip in honor of Tiberius the reigning Caesar. Hence both men were named after the City. The City was built on a majestic rock overlooking the Mediterranean Sea. The City was built above the shrine of Pan a god loved by both Romans and Greeks. The shrine of Pan enclosed by strong gates, was associated with fertility. It was a shrine notorious for sexual immorality and all evils that goes along with corruption and abuse of power.

The location fits perfectly for what Jesus was about to establish. It was a strong symbolic setting that had all the visual aid and environment that would drive home His message. His dramatic message was in preparation for His passion, crucifixion and ascension into heaven. He wanted to establish the stability, clear and concise leadership of His Church.

The gates of Pan became the gates of hell that would not prevail against the continuity of His Church. The shrine of Pan represented the world of evil that was and is still prevalent in the world. The name of the City represented powers of leaders that were evil or the devil himself.

In line with our first reading, Jesus foretold what would happen to the authorities in Jerusalem. As Jesus said **“The scribes and the Pharisees have taken their seat on the chair of Moses”** (Matt 23:2). That chair (just as the key given to Shebna) was the chair of authority given by God to the Pharisees and Scribes to lead His people. Like Shebna, the Pharisees and Scribes were bad and corrupt leaders who would be stripped of their authority. Their authority as Shebna’s authority was given to Eliakim, would be given to Simon Peter.

Christ is the ultimate rock of His Church’s stability and the source of her continuity. He has all the power and authority for the stability and continuity of His Church. Christ is the one who hold the key to His Kingdom. He desires to share these power and authority with His apostles. In giving the key to Simon Peter, Christ established Peter and all who succeed him as the visible father of His Church.

To choose this leader, Jesus asked His disciples two questions. One, **“Who do people say that the Son of man is?”** Two, **“But who do you say that I am?”** To the first question, His disciples mentioned names of past prophets, ending with John the Baptizer. To the second question, while all the others could not give an answer, Simon Peter to the delight of Jesus, blotted-out, **“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”**

Jesus responded with joy that the Holy Spirit had shared this insight with Simon Peter. Then Jesus gave Simon Peter the commission by saying, Peter is the rock upon which He will build His Church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against His Church. Jesus entrusted Peter with the keys to the kingdom of heaven. That is why the chair of Peter exists in the Catholic Church.

Jesus wanted to appoint a leader who would minster to His Church. Since then, there has been a succession of Popes who holds the same authority and key as Simon Peter. At every Mass, we pray for the Pope, who is currently Pope Francis to be a worthy leader of Jesus’ Church.

As we come to receive Jesus in the Eucharist, let us ask for a share of His wisdom and knowledge so we can always be His worthy follower.