

**23rd August, 21st Sunday in Ordinary Time. Homily based on Is 22:19-23,
Rom 11:33-36 and Mt 16:13-20**

My dear brothers and sisters, we might call this Sunday “Power Sunday,” because the main theme is the handing over of the “Keys” which open and shut, representing authority in the Church and in the Kingdom. In today’s Gospel, Jesus challenges us to know him personally and to serve him and love him as Lord, and he wants from each one of us our total, whole-hearted response.

The first reading, taken from Isaiah, gives a detailed description of the investiture of a royal court official. The robe, the sash, and the keys are insignia of this office. The Lord God, through Isaiah, tells Shebna that the keys of authority will be taken away from him, the unfaithful, proud “master of the royal palace.” In the second reading, St. Paul points out that God is the Source of all authority on earth and in Heaven. In the Gospel, Jesus reveals his plan to build his Church on the strong bedrock foundation of Peter, to whom he will then give the Keys of teaching and governing authority in the Church. Thus, Simon Bar-Jona receives a new mission symbolized by a change of name, Cephas (Peter), the rock (petros), on which Jesus will build his Church which the power of evil cannot overcome. Peter will be given the Keys of the Kingdom and the power to bind and to loose (make laws; exercise authority) on earth, decisions which Heaven will ratify. Thus, Jesus commissions Peter, giving him authority and leadership in the Church.

My dear brothers and sisters, Jesus is the Son of God and our personal Saviour. He is our Good Shepherd, the Saviour, and the Redeemer. He is our beloved Friend, closer to us than our dear ones, who walks with us, loves us, forges us, helps us, and transforms our lives. Therefore we need to experience Jesus as our Lord and Saviour and surrender our lives to him as St. Peter did.

God bless you.