

Twenty-First Sunday of Ordinary Time (A)

Gospel: Matthew 16:13-20

Scripture Focus

Matthew is the only evangelist to use the term "Church." Church is an earthly experience of the Kingdom of God. Because Jesus is always with us, the Church can never fail. The keys symbolize opening up doors to truth and wisdom. Giving the "keys of the kingdom" means that authority is being given to teach and make decisions for the Church community, although the extent of that authority is not clear. Authority exists only for the sake of the Church community and its work of proclaiming the Kingdom.

Life Focus

1. When have you felt overwhelmed by responsibility? What did you do about it?
2. When has being part of the Church helped you see life more clearly and act with courage? When has the Church been an obstacle?
3. Relate an experience when you were a "rock" of strength for another person.
4. What qualities do you see in yourself that Jesus saw in Peter?
5. Describe an experience when responsibility was entrusted to you.
6. When did you exercise authority that helped someone open a door to a fuller life?

1 ½ - Two Hour Format for small Church Community Meeting

Gathering (A few minutes are spent settling down)

1. Faith Sharing in Small Groups

Read the gospel of next Sunday out loud. Then take some time to read and reflect on Scripture Focus and Life Focus questions.

Count off for people to form groups of three (four at the most) to share on the Life Focus questions. (20 minutes)

2. Faith Sharing with the Whole Group

Reread the gospel passage out loud.

Then entire group focuses attention on answering the following questions: (Remember to honor and respect the confidential nature of the previous faith sharing.)

From your faith sharing in the smaller groups, what touched, encouraged or motivated you?

How might it affect your attitude or actions at home, at work, or in the larger community?

How about your small church community –how might all of you together respond to the gospel's challenge? (20 minutes)

3. Shared Prayer

Reread the gospel passage out loud a third time.

Then stand in a circle and take a few turns praying spontaneously together as the Spirit moves the group (prayers of petition, thanksgiving, praise, whatever). This is the time to hear the particular needs of the members and to pray for them.

Refreshments