

What is Church Authority?

“By the authority of the Church I mean the right and power which the Pope and the Bishops, as successors of the Apostles, have to teach and govern the faithful.”

(Baltimore Catechism 525)

In Scripture

“And I will clothe him with thy robe, and will strengthen him with thy girdle, and will give thy power into his hand: and he shall be as a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Juda. And I will lay the key of the house of David upon his shoulder: and he shall open, and none shall shut: and he shall shut, and none shall open.” (Isaiah 22:21-22)

“And if he will not hear them: tell the church. And if he will not hear the church, let him be to thee as the heathen and publican. Amen I say to you, whatsoever you shall bind upon earth, shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth, shall be loosed also in heaven. Again, I say to you, that if two of you shall consent upon earth, concerning anything whatsoever they shall ask, it shall be done to them by my Father who is in heaven.”
(St. Matthew 18:17-19)

“And Jesus answering, said to him: Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona: because flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my Father who is in heaven. And I say to thee: That thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And whatever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven.” (St. Matthew 16:17-19)

Binding and loosing according to the 1949 Baltimore Catechism means “to baptize, to forgive sin, and to offer the sacrifice of the Mass.” (Q145)

According to the modern Catechism: Whomever you exclude from your communion, will be excluded from communion with God; whomever you receive anew into your communion, God will welcome back into his. Reconciliation with the Church is inseparable from reconciliation with God. (CCC 1445)

According to Saints

“And from His overruling and eternal protection we have received the support of the Apostles’ aid also, which assuredly does not cease from its operation: and the strength of the foundation, on which the whole superstructure of the Church is reared, is not weakened by the weight of the temple that rests upon it. For the solidity of that faith which was praised in the chief of the Apostles is perpetual: and as that remains which Peter believed in Christ, so that remains which Christ instituted in Peter.” (St. Leo the Great, *Third Sermon*)

“The Church has but one ruler and one governor, the invisible one, Christ, whom the eternal Father hath made head over all the Church, which is his body; the visible one, the Pope, who as legitimate successor of Peter, the Prince of the Apostles, fills the Apostolic chair.”

“... He committed to his care the feeding of all His sheep, in such ample terms that He willed the very same power of ruling and governing the entire Church to descend to Peter’s successors.” (St. Matthew 18:17-19)

“Now is it not reasonable that no private individual should attribute to himself this infallible judgment on the interpretation or explanation of the Holy Word? Otherwise, where should we be? Who would be willing to submit to the yoke of a private individual? Why of one rather than of another? Let him talk as much as he will of analogy, of enthusiasm, of the Lord, of the Spirit, all this shall never so bind my understanding as that, if I must sail at hazard, I will not jump into the vessel of my own judgment, rather than that of another, let him talk Greek, Hebrew, Latin, Tartar, Moorish, and whatever you like. If we are to run the risk of erring, who would not choose to run it rather by following his own fancy, than by slavishly following that of Calvin or Luther? Everybody shall give liberty to his wits to run promiscuously about amongst opinions the most diverse possible; and indeed, he will perhaps light on truth as soon as another will. But it is impious to believe that Our Lord has not left us some supreme judge on earth to whom we can address ourselves in our difficulties, and who is so infallible in his judgments that we cannot err.

“I maintain that this judge is no other than the Church Catholic, which can in no way err in the interpretations and conclusions she makes with regard to the Holy Scripture, nor in the decisions she gives concerning the difficulties which are found therein. For who has ever heard this doubted of?” (St. Francis de Sales, *The Authority of the Church*, Ch 2)