

Pastor Lessons

Lesson 31

The Office Of The Keys

According to the Catechism...

What is the Office of the Keys?

The Office of the Keys is that special authority which Christ has given to His Church on earth to forgive the sins of repentant sinners, but to withhold forgiveness from the unrepentant as long as they do not repent.

Where is this written?

St. John the Evangelist writes in Chapter twenty: The Lord Jesus breathed on His disciples and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven." ----John 20:22-23

What to believe according to these words!

That when the called ministers of Christ deal with us by His divine command, in particular when they exclude openly unrepentant sinners from the Christian congregation and absolve those who repent of their sins and want to do better, this is just as valid and certain, even in heaven, as if Christ our dear Lord dealt with us Himself.

Through these words Jesus gave the church the authority to

1.) Preach the Gospel

2.) Administer the Sacraments

3.) Forgive and retain Sins

*This "special" authority "belongs" to the church. The government does not have this right, but it is the privilege of the church in general and of every local congregation in particular.

1.) PREACH THE GOSPEL

Christ gave this authority to the church. The congregation calls a pastor to act as its representative, as its mouthpiece, and by a formal installation service recognizes him as "**Servant of the Word.**" To him the congregation entrusts the ministry which it received from Christ. SO the, when the pastor proclaims the Gospel, he does so for the congregation and **in the stead and by the command of Christ. The church calls a pastor to carry out the Office of the Keys PUBLICLY and on behalf of the congregation**

-Pastoral Office is a divine institution (Acts 20:28; Eph 4:10-12)

2.) Administer the Sacraments

Christ gave this authority to the church. SO the congregation chooses, calls, and installs a pastor to preside at Baptisms and Holy Communion. And to him the congregation transfers the power which it received from Christ. So when the minister baptizes or celebrates Holy Communion, he (#3) does so in the name of the congregation (#2), or, to go back one step farther, in the name of Christ (#1).

1	2	3
CHRIST	CONGREGATION	MINISTER

3.) FORGIVE or RETAIN SINS

While Jesus was on earth, He spoke these words to people: “You sins are forgiven “ (Matthew 9:1-8)

Before leaving this earth He gave to the church the authority and right to forgive and retain sins (John 20:22-23)

So the congregation calls a pastor to exercise publicly the Office of the Keys. When, therefore, the pastor forgives sins, he does so in the name of the congregation, but more importantly in the NAME OF CHRIST.

This power is called “THE OFFICE of the KEYS.” A key unlocks or locks a door. Sin closes the door of heaven. Forgiveness of sins unlocks the door of heaven.

WHOSE SINS ARE TO BE FORGIVEN?

The sins of penitent sinners, those who turn from sin (with sorrow) and turn to Christ (with joy).

Whose sins are retained?

The sins of impenitent sinners, those who are not heartily-sorry for their sins, or do not believe. These sins are to be retained (not forgiven) so long as these persons do not repent.

See Attached sheet for CHURCH DISCIPLINE SHEET (COPIES WILL BE MADE AVAILABLE TO YOU FOR EACH STUDENT)

We ARE CALLED TO LIVE A LIFE OF FORGIVENESS!!!!