

Class 11
The Founding of the Church

1. Overview
 - a. When we looked at the life and ministry of Jesus, we briefly recognized that one of the things He came to accomplish in His time on earth was the founding of a Church
2. Why do we need a Church
 - a. Lots of people today say that there is no need for any Church or any organized religion
 - i. I'm spiritual but not religious
 1. Closes in on itself
 2. Seek to put aside religion in the name of networking, and positive feelings
 - a. The human experience is not simply one of feeling good and having nice things
 - b. The idea of organized religion is a part of our human nature
 - i. We are social creatures that are meant to interact with each other in society.
 - ii. It only makes sense that God has a relationship with us and saves us not only as individuals but as a social body as well
 - c. God gave us a Church
3. Jesus Christ the founder of the Church
 - a. Jesus clearly intended to found a visible church
 - i. Matthew 16:18
 - ii. Matthew 18: 15-17
 - b. The Early Christians understood that Jesus intended to found a visible Church on earth
 - i. Colossians 1:16-18
 - ii. Acts 20:28
4. Jesus the Founder of the Church
 - a. Every Christian faith claims Jesus Christ as its founder
 - b. But Jesus only founded one Church, not several hundred thousand
 - i. I pray not only for them, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, so that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me." Jn 17:20-21
 - c. The Primacy of St. Peter
 - i. Primacy of Peter
 1. Christ changed Peter's name from Simon to Peter (John 1:42, Mk 3:16)
 2. Peter was privileged- along with James and John- to witness the raising of the daughter of Jairus, the Transfiguration, and the Agony in the Garden
 3. Jesus taught from Peter's boat (Lk 5:3)
 4. Jesus paid the Temple Tax for Himself and Peter (Mt 17:27)

5. Jesus prayed specifically for Peter and ordered Peter to strengthen the other Apostles before His return (Lk 22:32)
 6. Jesus appeared to Peter alone following the Resurrection before the other Apostles (Lk 24:34, 1 Cor 15:5)
 7. In his Gospel, St. Matthew calls Peter the first among the Apostles (Mt 10:2)
 8. Peter is always listed as the first of the Apostles even though historically Andrew was the first one called by Jesus (Mt 10:1-4; Mk 3:16-19; Lk 6:13-16; Acts 1:13)
 9. St. John waits for St. Peter to enter the tomb first on Easter morning (Jn 20:2-10)
 10. Peter is always the one who speaks for the group of the Apostles; he is the “spokesman” (Mt 18:21; Mk 8:29; Lk 12:41; Jn 6:69)
- ii. Jesus specifically promised and bestowed the Primacy upon St. Peter
1. “When Jesus went into the region of Caesarea Philippi he asked his disciples, ‘Who do people say that the Son of Man is?’ They replied, ‘Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.’ He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’ Simon Peter said in reply, ‘You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.’ Jesus said to him in reply, ‘Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father. And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.’ Then he strictly ordered his disciples to tell no one that he was the Messiah.” (Mt 16:13-20-)
 - a. These words are directed solely at St. Peter and not towards the other Apostles
 - i. Peter is to guarantee unity and strength as the rock foundation of the “house” of the Church
 - ii. He is the holder of the “keys,” which means that he is the steward of the kingdom of God on earth
 - iii. He is to “bind and loose,” which is a means he can interpret the law, teach, and govern in such a way that what Peter will teach and do will be recognized in heaven
 2. “When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, ‘Simon, son of John, do you love me more than

these?’ He said to him, ‘Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.’ He said to him, ‘Feed my lambs.’ He then said to him a second time, ‘Simon, son of John, do you love me?’ He said to him, ‘Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.’ He said to him, ‘Tend my sheep.’ He said to him the third time, ‘Simon, son of John, do you love me?’ Peter was distressed that he had said to him a third time, ‘Do you love me?’ and he said to him, ‘Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.’ [Jesus] said to him, ‘Feed my sheep.’” (John 21:15-17)

- a. In this passage, Jesus gives Peter- and only Peter- the command to feed and tend His sheep, which represents the whole Church
 - i. In ancient and biblical language, the term “feed” as applied to human beings means to rule or govern (ex: Acts 20:28)
- iii. The Early Church knew Peter was the leader
 1. From the very start, St. Peter was the leading figure in the new Christian community
 2. He conducted the election of Matthias (Acts 1:15 ff.)
 3. He is the first to proclaim the message of Jesus Christ after Pentecost (Acts 2:14 ff.)
 4. He is the witness before the High Council (Acts 4:8 ff.)
 5. Excommunicates the first heretic (Acts 8:21)
 6. He accepts the first non-Jewish convert into the Church (Acts 10:1)
 7. He is the first to speak- and speaks with the most authority- at the Council of the Apostles (Acts 15)
 8. St. Paul goes to Jerusalem specifically to see Peter about a specific matter of Christian practice (Gal 1:18)
- iv. Peter’s Authority Continues
 1. Christ gave Peter his Primacy in order to be a force of unity and solidarity within the Church in order to ensure that the Church does not substantially change until the end of time
 2. It thus makes sense that since Peter would/did die, his authority would be passed on to his successor
 3. We can see that unity with Peter and his successors is essential for the Church. As a result, the Church that recognizes the successor of St. Peter as its head is the Church that Jesus Christ founded
 4. All other Christian denominations broke away from the Catholic Church at one point or another in history