



YEAR A – August 23, 2020

In the first reading (Is 22:19-23), we hear how Eliakim was chosen by God to replace Shebna, the master of the palace - because the master of the palace had turned away from God. He was making decisions for the people contrary to the mind of God. He was a selfish man and it led to his downfall - another casualty to corruption

There are many great reflections on the internet about these two men and what happened to their nation because it turned away from God. It makes you wonder about our nation too. But that reflection is for another time.

In this homily today, I would like to draw your attention to what God offers to Eliakim in Isaiah 22:22. He places the key to the house of David on the shoulder of Eliakim and declares that whatever Eliakim opens shall remain open and whatever he declares shut shall remain shut. Does that sound familiar? Fast forward to the Gospel (Matthew 16:13-20) and listen to what Jesus promises Peter. He says, “I will give you the keys to the kingdom of Heaven. “Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” The English translation can be misleading as it stands. It can imply (and for some people it does) that whatever Peter and his successors decide on earth will be accepted by God in heaven. That interpretation is not in the original text. The last part of each phrase, in the original Greek language, is future perfect tense, passive voice. It should be translated, “Whatever you bind on earth *will have been bound in heaven* and whatever you loose on earth *will have been loosed in heaven*.” The keys given to Peter open the door to the mind of God and enable him to make decisions of “binding & loosing” in accord with the mind of God, not in accord with his own mind. You can check it out on the internet at:

<https://www.gotquestions.org/binding-loosing.html>

The words of Jesus in the Lord’s prayer are very clear and leave no room for doubt. Jesus says to God the Father, “...Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven”. He does not say, “... Thy will be done in heaven as Peter (or anyone else) decides on earth.”

Some people believe that the “power of the Keys” was given to Peter alone. That is not true. Two chapters later in Matthew’s Gospel, Chapter 18, Verse 18, we find those familiar words applied to the community of believers (the disciples). Jesus says, “Whatever you bind on earth *will have been bound in heaven*. Whatever you loose on earth *will have been loosed in heaven*”. This time the word “you” is plural. It applies to the whole community, the “sensus communis”.

There is another important question. How does one know the “mind of God”. The answer to that question is in John 14:6. Jesus says, “I am the way and the truth and the life.” Our Lord’s “way” is the “mind of God”. It is our responsibility as disciples to know our Lord’s way, so we too can make decisions in accord with the “mind of God”.

If you were asked to explain “our Lord’s way” to someone who does not know Jesus, how would you do that? What would you say?