

21st Sunday of Ordinary Time

Isaiah 22:19-23
Ps 138:1-3, 6, 8
Romans 11:33-36
Matthew 16:13-20

Monday August 24
St. Bartholomew
Revelation 21:9b-14
Ps 145:10-13,17-18
John 1:45-51

Tuesday August 25
2 Thessalonians 2:1-3,14-17
Ps 96:10-13
Matthew 23:23-26

Wednesday August 26
2 Thessalonians 3:6-10,16-18
Ps 128:1-2,4-5
Matthew 23:27-32

Thursday August 27
St. Monica
1 Corinthians 1:1-9
Ps 145:2-7
Matthew 24:42-51

Friday August 28
St. Augustine
1 Corinthians 1:17-25
Ps 33:1-2,4-5,10-11
Matthew 25:1-13

Saturday August 29
Passion of John the Baptist
1 Corinthians 1:26-31
Ps 33:12-13,18-21
Mark 6:17-29

When Jesus ordained Peter to become the rock upon which he would build his Church, he made a promise. The gates of hell, he said, speaking of the netherworld that belongs to the principalities and powers of darkness (see Ephesians 6), "shall never prevail against it."

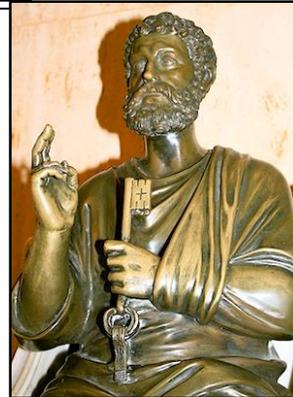
Jesus did not say that hell would never win battles against the Church. He said that the *gates* of hell would not win. Of course they won't; gates don't attack! Gates protect. Gates hold inside their boundaries whatever has been enclosed by a fence or wall. Do you know anyone who's been imprisoned by their sins? Or by hellish circumstances?

Christians are not called to take a defensive posture against attacks and encroachments from evil-doers. Christians are called to take the offensive – we are called to attack the very gates of hell, knock them down, and

conquer the devils that are trying to drag people into their kingdom of misery and eternal death.

What Jesus did 2000 years ago to free people from evil he still does today through you and me.

For the sinners who want to escape from evil before it's too late, Jesus gave gate keys to Peter when he ordained him as the first shepherd (priest and pope) of



Christianity. These keys have been passed from generation to generation through the unbroken line of Catholic priests.

What are the keys? The gates of hell are unlocked by Sacraments; they open the way to eternal life. When a priest "looses" (releases)

the grace and forgiveness of God upon a repentant sinner during the Sacrament of Reconciliation, or when a priest "binds" a man and woman together in the Sacrament of Marriage, it's Jesus who's doing it through him.

The supernatural power of the Sacraments conquers evil every time we take them seriously and rely on the graces they provide.

Reflect & Discuss:

1. Where is there a locked gate in your life, which needs to get blown open so that Jesus can rescue you from some sort of darkness?
2. What will you do this week to utilize the Sacraments more deeply, more profoundly?
3. Who do you say Jesus really is, and how do you encounter this Jesus in the Sacraments?
4. Which Sacrament (Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Reconciliation, Marriage, Ordination, or the Anointing of the Sick) is most powerful for you personally? Why?