

Handout: 1 Peter Lesson 2

For if you think heaven is still closed, remember that the Lord left here the keys thereof to Peter, and through him to the Church; which keys every one that is here questioned and confesses, shall carry with him.

Tertullian (150 -220 AD)

Hail! Peter, tongue of the disciples, voice of the preachers, eye of the Apostles, guardian of heaven, first-born of those who bear the keys!

St. Ephraim (306-370 AD)

The redemptive power of suffering has always been a teaching of the Church. St. Paul wrote: *I rejoice in my sufferings. In my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ's sufferings* (Col 1:24). We unite our sufferings to the suffering of Jesus as a pleasing sacrifice to God: "... Though often unconscious collaborators with God's will, they can also enter deliberately into the divine plan by their actions, their prayers, and their sufferings. Then they fully become 'God's fellow workers' and co-workers for his kingdom" (CCC 307; also see 618 and 1508). St. Peter's exposition in 3:13-22 focuses on the reasons for which Christians should rejoice:

1. By his suffering and death, Christ, the righteous Son of God, saved the unrighteous (verse 18).
2. By His resurrection Jesus received new life in the Spirit which He communicates to all who believe in Him through the Sacrament of Baptism, cleansing them from all sin (verses 18, 21).
3. Just as Noah and his family were saved through water, so too are Christians saved through the baptismal waters that have cleared their consciousness of the power of sin over their lives (verses 19-22).
4. Therefore, Christians do not need to share the fear of sinners or be put to shame by the actions of sinners but should rejoice in suffering because of their hope in Christ who has ascended to the right hand of God with power over all heaven and earth (verses 13-14, 21-22).

1 Peter 3:15b: *Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope ...* The word "explanation" is translated from the Greek word *apologia* which can be used in a legal sense as a "defense" of one's position as in giving one's "testimony." It is where get the word "apologetics," the discipline of defending a position (often religious) through the systematic use of information. Early Christian writers who defended the Christian faith against critics and gave testimony of their faith to others were called "apologists" (see word in Lk 12:11-12; Acts 22:1 and 25:16).

The baptized Christian receives what was not possible under the rituals of the Old Covenant:

1. He/she receives a new birth in the Spirit into the family of God (CCC 168, 1236, 1253-55, 1265-66)
2. He/she becomes a member of the Body of Christ (CCC 537, 818, 871, 950, 985, 1003, 1267-70)
3. He/she is forgiven all past sins (CCC 403, 405, 628, 977-80, 1262-66)
4. He/she receives a consecration into the holy priesthood of believers (CCC 119, 1141, 1305, 1546, 1591)
5. He/she receives a participation in the life of the Trinity (CCC 265)

6. He/she is justified and sanctified (CCC 1987, 1992, 2020, 2813)
7. He/she receives the hope of eternal salvation (CCC 1023, 2068)

Concerning 1 Peter 3:19 and 4:6 the Catechism teaches in agreement with the Apostles' Creed. "The gospel was preached even to the dead.' The descent into hell [Hades] brings the Gospel message of salvation to complete fulfillment. This is the last phase of Jesus' messianic mission, a phase which is condensed in time but vast in its real significance: the spread of Christ's redemptive work to all men of all times and all places, for all who are saved have been made sharers in the redemption" (CCC 634).

"Christ went down into the depths of death so that 'the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.' Jesus, 'the Author of life,' by dying destroyed 'him who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and [delivered] all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong bondage.' Henceforth the risen Christ holds 'the keys of Death and Hades,' so that 'at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth'" (CCC 635; alluding to or quoting from Mt 12:40; Jn 5:25; Rom 10:7; Eph 4:9; Heb 2:14-15; cf Acts 3:13; Rev 1:18; Phil 2:10).

In I Peter 5:7-11 St. Peter advises Christians to be prepared for Christ's return in 5 ways:

- By being serious about the condition of their souls
- By being immersed in prayer
- By being obedient to Christ's command to love one another
- By being hospitable without complaint
- By using the gifts God has given them to serve one another

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