

Why does true Christianity need a Pope?

God is no fool. He knows how far His saving message would stray from the truth if left to personal interpretation. Look at some of the extreme sects this idea has fostered. God does not have a communication problem. Mankind has a rebellion problem. For God's Word to do God's work among us it must mean what it is supposed to mean. God did not leave us orphans to search and wonder about without sure guidance. His Good News is too important. We need not, and should not, be tempted to pick and choose what pleases us in God's holy message. We need the full Word. Even among His chosen twelve Jesus chose one leader with the guarantee and authority to unite all His followers in faith. The Bible is clear about this.

Imagine for a moment, our United States Constitution without a court to interpret it. Everyone would be required to decide for himself what the law means for him. What a mess that would be. The separated parts of modern Christianity without papal authority fall into the same kind of confusion. Today there are hundreds of differing denominations each with a different opinion of truth. In reality there can be only one truth. Opinion does not count. Jesus did not intend us to be sheep without a shepherd. Jesus, who is the Word of God, is the *Truth that sets us free*. Right interpretation is essential for full and true Christianity. This fullness of truth comes only through the *Keys to the Kingdom* in guaranteed partnership with the Holy Spirit.

Jesus appointed apostles to lead His Church and protect the truth of His Good News alive in His Church. He did not found a debating society. He did not found a smorgasbord of choices. He clearly assigned St. Peter as head of the apostolic leadership group. Others, like Paul and James advised and even admonished Peter in the process of decision making, and Peter listened. But once Peter spoke with authority they all knew the matter was settled.

St. Peter was martyred in Rome where he was leader of the local Church as well as chief overseer of all authentic Christian communities everywhere. Writings that survive from this time tell us He was widely consulted and traveled extensively tending to his catholic responsibilities. When Peter died his successors as Bishops of Rome were looked upon to fill his holy office. We have records of sermons by early bishops who were appointed by the apostles that tell us, to know true teaching of Jesus, consult the bishops. If bishops should disagree we should consult the bishop of Rome. Even while St. John, the apostle, was still alive we have letters to Pope Clement from bishops living close to St. John asking for authentic advice. As the Church grew a stronger church government also grew as threats to unity required and the Holy Spirit led.

Our Pope is the ordinary bishop of Rome, the Primate of Italy, the Patriarch of the Western Church, and the Pope of the one, original, holy, Catholic and apostolic Church. It is neither great wisdom, personal holiness nor the desires of men that give Peter and his successors this authority. Rather it is the will of the Father, the assignment by Jesus, and the sure help of the Holy Spirit.

Why do we need a Pope? We need a pope for unity, order and truth in matters of faith and morals. But mostly we need a Pope because God in His divine wisdom set things up that way.