

# The Primacy of St. Peter & the Primacy of the Pope

## What Do These Expressions Mean and How Are They Connected?

### **Part 1 of an Investigation of Papal Primacy**

Many of the articles of faith we Catholics were brought up to believe seem to have been planted in us as deeply as our DNA. Many we have accepted without any questioning whatsoever. They seem as though they were cast in stone and created at the foundation of time. In this new series [Vynette Holliday](#) investigates the historical record, the scriptural references, and authoritative teachings to explore where the ideas of **Papal Primacy** came from. What are Catholics actually taught by the authoritative sources and what are the popularly held myths that have grown up around the notions of the **Primacy of Peter** and the primacy of his successors?

#### **The popular Catholic beliefs about primacy...**

After nearly two thousand years, it's time – more than time – for Rome's claims of Apostolic Succession through the **Apostle Peter** to be subjected to that particularly harsh light of robust enquiry free from the clouds of sanctity and incense that have hitherto successfully repelled territorial invaders.

The most common beliefs held by Catholics are:

that **Peter** was the first to preach the gospel in Rome;

that **Peter** founded the Church in Rome;

that as a result of his residence in Rome, **Peter** passed on his primacy to his successors the Popes, as Bishops of Rome.

These beliefs are neatly summed up by the [Very Rev. Joseph Faà Di Bruno](#)<sup>[1]</sup>:

"St. Peter was the first to preach the gospel in Rome, and owing to his sanctity, zeal, prudence and power of working miracles, it was not long before he made many converts.

"The number of Christians increasing steadily each year, he chose the most distinguished among them and sent them as bishops or priests to different parts of the world as recorded in the Roman Martyrology...

"St. Peter having fixed his See in Rome to the end of his life and having died there a martyr, it follows as a matter of course, that his heirs and successors in that See should enjoy the prerogatives of that episcopate, that is, the supremacy which St. Peter received."

It is only natural that we Catholics should believe without question what the Church has claimed for so many centuries. Unfortunately, when these common beliefs are examined, they prove to be no more than a mixture of errors, confusions, and downright deceptions.

#### **What Catholics are required to believe...**

It will perhaps come as a great surprise to many Catholics but they are not required to believe that **Peter** either went to Rome, or that he established his church there.

Any doctrine of faith or morals which is necessary for all Catholics to believe at all times is classified as a *dogma de fide*. All *de fide dogmas* are listed in *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma* by [Dr. Ludwig Ott](#)<sup>[2]</sup>.

There is no *dogma de fide* about **Peter's** residence in Rome. Catholics must simply believe that:

"According to Christ's ordinance, Peter is to have successors in his primacy over the whole church and for all time." (p.282)

"The successors of St. Peter in the primacy are the Bishops of Rome." (p.283)

And from Sacred **Canon Law**, which binds all believing Catholics:

"The office uniquely committed by the Lord to Peter, the first of the Apostles, and to be transmitted to his successors, abides in the Bishop of the Church the Rome. He is the head of the College of Bishops, the Vicar of Christ and the Pastor of the Universal Church here on earth. Consequently, by virtue of his office, he has supreme, full, immediate and universal ordinary power in the Church, and he can always freely exercise this power." (Canon 331)

An interesting quote from the *Catholic Encyclopedia* article "[The Pope](#)" [\[LINK\]](#) where the **Papal Primacy** is defined under pain of anathema for doubters and disbelievers:

"The primacy of St. Peter and the perpetuity of that primacy in the Roman See are dogmatically defined in the canons attached to the first two chapters of the Constitution *Pastor Aeternus*:

1. "If any one shall say that Blessed Peter the Apostle was not constituted by Christ our Lord as chief of all the Apostles and the visible head of the whole Church militant: or that he did not receive directly and immediately from the same Lord Jesus Christ a primacy of true and proper jurisdiction, but one of honor only: let him be anathema."

2. "If any one shall say it is not by the institution of the Christ our Lord Himself or by divinely established right that Blessed Peter has perpetual successors in his primacy over the universal Church: or that the Roman Pontiff is not the successor of Blessed Peter in the same primacy: let him be anathema."

So we have established that although many Catholics believe that **Peter** travelled to Rome and established the church there, they are under no obligation to do so.

Sacred **Canon Law**, the Constitution *Pastor Aeternus*, and [Dr. Ludwig Ott](#) all claim that the Roman Pontiff holds the primacy from Peter by a divine ordinance. How this primacy was transferred from Peter to the Bishop of Rome is left totally unexplained. [Dr. Ott](#) merely states that he records "*the more usual theological viewpoint*". From this it follows that Catholics are simply required to believe that **Peter** passed on the primacy to the popes, and the authorities are under no obligation to produce evidence by way of explanation or substantiation.

Asserting **Peter's** ministry in Rome would surely imply that the required historical evidence is available. In Part 2, we will examine what evidence the 'authorities' can produce.

#### **FOOTNOTES:**

[1] *Catholic Belief: Or A Short And Simple Exposition Of Catholic Doctrine*, Very Rev. Joseph Faà Di Bruno, D.D, Benziger Brothers, printers to the Holy Apostolic See, 1884.

[2] *Catholic Encyclopedia article Genealogy Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, Dr. Ludwig Ott, Mercier Press Ltd, Cork, Ireland, 1955.

### **Part 2 of an Investigation of Papal Primacy**

In the second commentary in this series examining the **Primacy** claims within the Catholic tradition, [Vynette Holliday](#) lays out a raft of authoritative quotations where the questions of **Primacy** have been laid out. What are we Catholics actually taught by the authoritative sources and what are the popularly held myths that have grown up around the notions of the **Primacy of Peter** and the **primacy of his successors**?

#### **The Papacy : Unequivocal Assertions**

##### **Pope Benedict XVI**

"I thank the Lord for allowing me, as the Successor of Saint Peter in the See of Rome, to make this pilgrimage to the tomb of Saint Edward the Confessor...This is the word of encouragement which I wish to leave with you this evening, and I do so in fidelity to my ministry as the Bishop of Rome and the Successor of Saint Peter, charged with a particular care for the unity of Christ's flock."  
[September 17, 2010, Westminster Abbey]

### Catechism of the Catholic Church

936: "The Lord made St. Peter the visible foundation of his Church. He entrusted the keys of the Church to him. The bishop of the Church of Rome, successor to St. Peter, is "head of the college of bishops, the Vicar of Christ and Pastor of the universal Church on earth." [1]

883: "The college or body of bishops has no authority unless united with the Roman Pontiff, Peter's successor, as its head." As such, this college has "supreme and full authority over the universal Church; but this power cannot be exercised without the agreement of the Roman Pontiff." [2]

### The Second Vatican Council

There is a widespread view amongst Catholics that Vatican II heralded a new beginning for the Church, a breath of fresh air, a departure from the old hard-edged inflexibility. I do not ascribe to this view.

On the issue that really matters, the Papacy's understanding of itself, the conciliar document *The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church: Lumen Gentium* [3] ensured that the old intransigence and inflexibility would continue.

Although the document was couched in appealing words and noble sentiments, and exuded an overall odor of sanctity, the steel fist in the velvet glove manifested itself in passages reaffirming **Vatican I**. The bottom line is that despite all the talk about collegiality, the Pope still retained sole Primacy and Infallibility, and thus we continue to witness the Papacy becoming ever more inflexible, centralized and monolithic.

"This Sacred Council, following closely in the footsteps of the First Vatican Council, with that Council teaches and declares that Jesus Christ, the eternal Shepherd, established His holy Church, having sent forth the apostles as He Himself had been sent by the Father; and He willed that their successors, namely the bishops, should be shepherds in His Church, even to the consummation of the world. And in order that the episcopate itself might be one and undivided, He placed Blessed Peter over the other apostles, and instituted in him a permanent and visible source and foundation of unity of faith and communion. And all this teaching [Vatican I] about the institution, the perpetuity, the meaning and reason for the sacred primacy of the Roman Pontiff *and of his infallible magisterium*, this Sacred Council again proposes to be firmly believed by all the faithful." [LG:III:18]

"But the college or body of bishops has no authority unless it is understood together with the Roman Pontiff, the successor of Peter as its head. The pope's power of primacy over all, both pastors and faithful, remains whole and intact. In virtue of his office, that is, as Vicar of Christ and pastor of the whole Church, the Roman Pontiff has full, supreme and universal power over the Church." [LG:III:22]

"The religious submission of mind and will [of the faithful] must be shown in a special way to the authentic magisterium of the Roman Pontiff, even when he is not speaking *ex cathedra*; that is, it must be shown in such a way that his supreme magisterium is acknowledged with reverence, the judgments made by him are sincerely adhered to, according to his manifest mind and will. His mind and will in the matter may be known either from the character of the documents, from his frequent repetition of the same doctrine, or from his manner of speaking." [LG:III:25]

### The Apostle Peter: Unequivocal Assertions

#### The Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith

"In Peter's person, mission and ministry, in his presence and death in Rome attested by the most ancient literary and archaeological tradition – the Church sees a deeper reality essentially related to her own mystery of communion and salvation: *'Ubi Petrus, ibi ergo Ecclesia'*. From the beginning and

with increasing clarity, the Church has understood that, just as there is a succession of the Apostles in the ministry of Bishops, so too the ministry of unity entrusted to Peter belongs to the permanent structure of Christ's Church and that this succession is established in the See of his martyrdom."<sup>[4]</sup>

### The Catholic Encyclopedia

"It is an indisputably established historical fact that St. Peter labored in Rome during the last portion of his life, and there ended his earthly course in martyrdom. As to the duration of his Apostolic activity in the Roman Capital, the continuity or otherwise of his residence there, the details and success of his labors, and the chronology of his arrival and death, all these questions are uncertain, and can be solved only on hypotheses more or less well-founded."

"The essential fact is that Peter died at Rome: this constitutes the historical foundation of the claim of the Bishops of Rome to the Apostolic Primacy of Peter. St. Peter's residence and death in Rome are established beyond contention as historical facts by a series of distinct testimonies."<sup>[5]</sup>

It would seem from all the foregoing that the Papacy's unequivocal assertions about Peter, about its authority deriving from Peter, and about Peter's Roman ministry were historical certainties, able to be demonstrated and verified. These assertions, however, quickly unravel when tested.

### Irreconcilable Inconsistencies

Traditions about Peter's presence in Rome only surfaced in the latter half of the second century, around the same period as the various apocryphal/pseudographical works and the Clementine literature, with its elaborate and fanciful tales about Simon Peter and Simon Magus, began to proliferate.

Elements from these fables crept into subsequent writings until the fully fledged legend of Peter's twenty-five year episcopacy and martyrdom in Rome reached its final form with Jerome.

It is a task of epic proportions even to attempt an analysis of all the afore-mentioned works from antiquity that led up to these assertions by Jerome.

Instead, we will focus on one crucial issue. It is Peter's alleged death in Rome that constitutes the historical foundation of the claim of the Bishops of Rome to the Apostolic Primacy of Peter. For Peter to have died in Rome, it is obviously necessary that he should have first arrived there. Yet the authorities cannot come up with any evidence, not even a consistent story regarding his arrival, his ministry, his sojourn, or his death in Rome.

### The Dating Game

Did Peter's Pontificate begin in Rome in 32 AD as claimed in the Catholic Encyclopedia Pope List?<sup>[6]</sup>

Or did it begin in 42 AD, the second year of Claudius, as claimed by Jerome?<sup>[7]</sup>

Or would it have been impossible for Peter to arrive in Rome before 62 AD as stated by the acclaimed Catholic Church historian Msgr. Philip Hughes?<sup>[8]</sup>

Msgr. Hughes has this to say on the subject of Peter's residence in Rome:

"...The precise date at which the Roman Church was founded we do not know, nor the date at which St. Peter first went to Rome. But it is universally the tradition of this primitive Christianity that St. Peter ruled the Roman Church and that at Rome he gave his life for Christ in the persecution of Nero." [p14]

Hughes goes on:

"...About the origins of Christianity in Rome we know nothing. It is already a flourishing church in 56 AD when St. Paul refers to it. Three years later he arrived in Rome himself, a prisoner, for the hearing of his appeal to Caesar." [p17]

"...St. Peter first appeared there apparently some three years later, about the time St. Paul, acquitted, had left the city." [p18]

According to Hughes then:

There was a "flourishing" Christian community in Rome when [Paul](#) first arrived there, as we already knew from the *New Testament*.

The earliest time he can place [Peter](#) in Rome is between [Paul's](#) two captive visits.

[Peter](#), therefore, could not have arrived in Rome before 62 AD.

Even though [Peter's](#) alleged death in Rome constitutes the historical foundation of the claim by the Bishops of Rome to the Apostolic Primacy of Peter, and even though it is asserted by then [Cardinal Josef Ratzinger](#) that *"In Peter's person, mission and ministry, in his presence and death in Rome attested by the most ancient literary and archaeological tradition – the Church sees a deeper reality essentially related to her own mystery of communion and salvation: 'Ubi Petrus, ibi ergo Ecclesia',"* the authorities cannot produce one scintilla of evidence to support claims so monumental in their historical implications.

As [Richard P McBrien](#), Crowley-O'Brien Professor of Theology at the University of Notre Dame, states:

"Few, if any, traditions associated with the Papacy have anything at all to do with the Apostle Peter, or with the Lord himself for that matter."<sup>[9]</sup>

If [Peter](#) was never in Rome, then where was he? In Part 3 of this series we will begin to examine the evidence available to us.

#### FOOTNOTES:

[1] [Catechism of the Catholic Church](#)

[2] [Catechism of the Catholic Church](#)

[3] [The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church: Lumen Gentium](#)

[4] *The Primacy of the Successor of Peter in the Mystery of the Church: Reflections of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith*, by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, Prefect, and Tarcisio Bertone, Archbishop emeritus of Vercelli, Secretary. Reported in *Il Primato del Successore di Pietro*, Atti del Simposio teologico, Rome, 2-4 December 1996, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Vatican City, 1998.

[5] Catholic Encyclopedia article [St. Peter, Prince of the Apostles: Activity and death in Rome - Burial Place](#)

[6] Catholic Encyclopedia Article: [The List of Popes](#)

[7] Jerome, *Lives of Illustrious Men*, trans. by Ernest C. Richardson, Vol. III, The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1953 p. 361.

[8] *A Popular History of the Catholic Church*, Msgr Philip Hughes, Macmillan & Co, 1951

[9] *Lives of the Popes: The Pontiffs from St. Peter to John Paul II*, McBrien, Richard P., Harper, San Francisco, 1997, p.392

### Part 3 of an Investigation of Papal Primacy

This series from [Vynette Holliday](#) grows more fascinating with each installment – particularly for those who followed closely the previous explorations of this general territory that [Ian Elmer](#) and [Tom Lee](#) led us through in their commentaries. Today's essay from [Vynette](#) explores in an interesting way the different pictures [Peter](#) and [Paul](#) had in their minds of both "authority" (who they thought they answered to) and to whom their work or mission was to be directed to.

As I wrote in [Part 2](#), the fully fledged tradition of [Peter's](#) twenty-five year episcopacy and martyrdom in Rome reached its final form with [Jerome](#).

This tradition is not only bereft of any evidence but is also demonstrably false as it contradicts statements from the *New Testament* and the events of secular history.

#### Evidentiary Sources

In Part 2, I posed the question: "If [Peter](#) was never in Rome, then where was he?" The interplay between two sources of information – the *New Testament* and the record of secular history – may provide us with the answer.

This evidence falls into two categories: the ministries of **Peter** and **Paul**, and the presence or absence of **Peter** at certain times and in certain places.

### ***Before the death of Jesus...***

**Peter** and the other disciples were instructed by **Jesus** not to go into the "*way of the Gentiles*" or to enter "*any city of the Samaritans*". Before his death, **Jesus'** instruction was restricted to the area of his own ministry: **Galilee** and **Judah**.

"These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter you not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." [Matthew 10:5-6]

Take note that:

- i. **Jesus** specified "*the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*"
- ii. In [Part V of the Virgin Birth series](#), I drew attention to the fact that in **Luke 1:32-33** the messenger **Gabriel** tells **Mary** that her son to be born would rule over the **House of Jacob** forever. We will, in due course, discuss the implications arising from these two statements.

The care of these same "*lost sheep of the house of Israel*" is committed to the care of **Peter** and the other disciples.

"Be the shepherds of the flock of God that is entrusted to you: watch over it, not simply as a duty but gladly, because God wants it; not for sordid money, but because you are eager to do it. Never be a dictator over any group that is put in your charge, but be an example that the whole flock can follow. When the chief shepherd appears, you will be given the crown of unfading glory." [1 Peter 5:1-4]

### ***After the death of Jesus***

#### **The Great Commission:**

In **Matthew 28:18-19**, **Jesus** says to his disciples:

"Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples among all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.'"

Because of **Jesus'** status transformation through being raised by God, his authority is now universal and the disciples are told to go to **Israelites** living "*among all nations*" and not just to the regions of "*the house of Israel*" living in **Galilee** and **Judah**, as in the former command of **Matthew 10:5-6**. [Note: It should be obvious that "nations" cannot be discipled. Therefore, the correct translation of this verse is not "*go and make disciples of all nations*" but rather "*go and make disciples among all nations*".]

"The move away from the region of Jesus' ministry to the wider reaches of the Roman Empire where countless Israelite *émigrés* lived, served to clarify and justify how Matthew's followers of an Israelite Jesus got to be his disciples although they did not live in the land of Israel. In the Gospel story, sayings such as '*I tell you, many will come from east and west and eat with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven*' [Matthew 8:11] refer to the many Israelites who would be gathered from east and west to feast in the forthcoming theocracy, to be located in Israel's promised land."<sup>[1]</sup>

The role of the **Hebrew Messiah** is **Israelite-specific**, a role undertaken on behalf of **Israel**. Hence, when the disciples are told to teach "*all nations*"; it always means to teach **Israelites** living *among* "*all nations*".

#### **A division of ministries between Peter and Paul**

Following the instructions of **Jesus**, the gospel message carried by **Peter** and the other disciples was directed toward **Israelites** only. **Paul**, however, not being a disciple of **Jesus**, argued that if **non-Israelites** followed the teachings of **Jesus** and accepted **Abraham** as their "*father*", then they too could be grafted into the tree of **Israel**: they too could enter into a covenant relationship with the **God of Israel**. His

convincing arguments from the *Hebrew Scriptures* themselves, against the initial reluctance of Peter and other followers of Jesus, eventually carried the day.

Both Peter and Paul eventually agreed to a clear division of duties. Read about it in Paul's *Letters to the Romans, Galatians, 2nd Timothy*, and in *the Book of Acts*.

In *Romans 15:15-16*, Paul stated that:

"I have written you quite boldly on some points, as if to remind you of them again, because of the grace God gave me to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles with the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit."

In *2 Timothy 4:16-17*:

"At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them. But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it."

And in *Galatians 2:8*:

"For God who made Peter an apostle to the Jews also made me an apostle to the Gentiles. Recognizing the favor bestowed on me, those pillars of our society James, Cephas (Peter) and John accepted Barnabas and myself as partners and shook hands on it."

This point of division of ministries is reaffirmed by both Peter and Paul many times in their writings; *Rom. 11:13, 15:16-20, 1 Pet. 1:1*. Paul always claimed his mission to the Gentiles to be directed by God and not a delegation from men; *Acts 22:21, 23:11, 2 Tim 1:11*. Equally, he denied several times that he built on other men's foundations or works; *2 Cor. 10:15, Rom. 15:20*. It must be pointed out that Paul, however, not being restricted by any personal instructions from Jesus one way or the other, ministered to both Jew and Gentile wherever he found them.

This was not the case with Peter. Peter was personally instructed by Jesus to go only "to the lost sheep of the House of Israel" living among all nations. It is untenable to suggest that Peter, having denied Jesus three times before the crucifixion to save his own life, only to come face to face with Jesus later, would even consider disobeying the instructions of the man now demonstrated by God to be the Hebrew Messiah. Peter would not deny or disobey his risen Lord again.

#### FOOTNOTES:

[1] Bruce J. Malina, Richard L. Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels*, pp 141-142

### **Part 4 of an Investigation of Papal Primacy**

Vynette's series grows more and more like an Agatha Christie or Sherlock Holmes detective puzzle as it proceeds. In today's installment the chief objective is to try and establish the whereabouts of St Peter from around the time of the first Pentecost up until the time of his death in 67AD.

In [Part 2](#), I posed the question: "If Peter was never in Rome, then where was he?"

Now we will try to pinpoint Peter's location in places other than Rome at various times. This task requires us to glean every possible grain of information available to us from the *New Testament* and from the record of secular history.

Peter is recorded in *Acts* as being present in Jerusalem from the death of Jesus until the execution of Stephen. Thereafter, he is recorded as being either in Jerusalem or travelling on various missionary journeys throughout Judea, Samaria, and Galilee. This period extends from 30 AD to 50 AD.

A pinpoint in time from which we can establish more specific details, however, is given to us in *Acts 18:12*:

"While Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews made a united attack on Paul and brought him into court."

Gallio's original name was **Lucius Annaeus Novatus**. He was the son of the rhetorician **Seneca the Elder** and the elder brother of **Seneca the Younger**. He was adopted by **Lucius Junius Gallio** from whom he took the name of **Junius Gallio**. Gallio is mentioned in several Roman sources.

It is now possible to establish the exact year of Gallio's proconsulship through the discovery of the *Delphi Inscription* of the **Emperor Claudius** in which Gallio is referred to as the Proconsul of Achaia. By combining the date of the **Claudius' Inscription** with other historical factors, Gallio's proconsulship in Achaia can be precisely dated between late spring and late October 52 AD.[1]

Using this pinpoint in time, in combination with other information provided in *Acts* and in *Paul's letters*, we can now work backwards from this precise date of 52 AD to establish an early chronology of **Paul's** travels. For our purposes, we will focus only on those aspects of the chronology which enable us to fix **Peter's** presence with reasonable accuracy at various times and in various places.

### **Peter in Jerusalem: 30 - 33 AD**

**Peter** confronts Jerusalem elites from Pentecost until the **execution of Stephen**, which took place before **Paul's** epiphany on the road to Damascus. [see Acts 1- 7 and Galatians 1]

### **Peter in Jerusalem: 36-37 AD**

"Then after three years [from his epiphany on the road to Damascus], I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Peter and stayed with him fifteen days but I did not see any other apostle except James the Lord's brother." [Galatians 1:18-19. Read in conjunction with Acts 9:26]

### **Peter in Jerusalem: March-April 43 or 44 AD**

**Peter** is jailed by **Herod Agrippa I**, King of Judea and Samaria A.D. 41-44, grandson of **Herod the Great**.

"It was about this time [the time of the famine reported in Acts 11] that King Herod arrested some who belonged to the church, intending to persecute them. He had James, the brother of John, put to death with the sword. When he saw that this pleased the Jews, he proceeded to seize Peter also. This happened during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. After arresting him, he put him in prison, handing him over to be guarded by four squads of four soldiers each. Herod intended to bring him out for public trial after the Passover." [Acts 12:1-4]

**Peter** escapes before his trial is to begin and departs to *"another place"* [Acts 12:1-17].

**Note:** The parallels between the recounting of the death of **Herod Agrippa** in *Acts 12:19-23* and **Josephus'** account of the same event [Ant. 19.343-52, cf.18.200] are quite striking.

### **Peter in Jerusalem: 50 AD**

#### **Jerusalem Council**

The necessity or otherwise of circumcision for Gentile believers had caused conflict in Antioch. **Paul** and **Barnabas**, along with *"some other believers"*, were appointed to go and discuss the issue with the elders and apostles in Jerusalem. A decision was reached by the apostles and elders in the name of the whole Jerusalem church that the Gentiles should not be required to be circumcised, although they should still observe some Levitical laws regarding diet and morality. The elders and apostles send a letter to that effect to the Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia. [See Acts 15:1-35]

The scholarly consensus is that the **Jerusalem Council** described in *Acts 15* is the same meeting that **Paul** describes in *Galatians 2*. In verse 9 of *Galatians 2* we read that:

"James, Cephas and John, those reputed to be pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognized the grace given to me. They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised."

By analyzing all the above information, it is reasonable to conclude that between 30 AD and 50 AD, between **Pentecost** and the **Jerusalem Council**, **Peter** had been pursuing his mission to the Jews and,

according to [Paul](#), his intention in 50 AD was to continue the way he had begun, as the [Apostle to the Jews](#).

### **Peter in Antioch**

"When Peter came to Antioch, I [Paul] opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong. Before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group." [Gal. 2:11-13]

Scholars are divided on the date of this incident. It can be narrowed down, however, to just before the [Jerusalem Council](#) or just after so it makes little difference for our purposes, which are to demonstrate that there is sufficient data in *Acts* and *Paul's letter to the Galatians* to situate [Peter](#) either in [Jerusalem](#), or engaged on various missionary journeys in the regions of [Judea](#), [Samaria](#) and [Galilee](#), or finally in [Antioch](#) between 30 AD and 50 AD.

As we have arrived in [Antioch](#), it is perhaps noteworthy to point out that the Papacy is not the only claimant to Apostolic Succession through [Peter](#).

The [Syrian Orthodox Church](#) claims an unbroken Apostolic Succession beginning with [Peter](#) founding the Church at Antioch and continuing to this day. They give the dates 37AD-67AD for Peter's Patriarchate.

Even though I place as little credence in their supposed line of succession as I do in that of the Papacy, there was a great deal of apostolic activity at Antioch and at least [Peter](#) was recorded in the *New Testament* as actually being in that city, whereas the only *New Testament* reference that supporters for [Peter's](#) presence in Rome can muster up is:

"She who is in Babylon salutes you and so does my son Mark" [1 Peter 5:13]

It is necessary to deal with this assertion at length so, once we have exhausted all the other sources, we will take a look at the *Petrine Epistles*.

### **FOOTNOTES:**

[1] For a comprehensive analysis see *According to Paul: studies in the theology of the Apostle*, Joseph A Fitzmyer S.J., Paulist Press, 1993, pp 44-46.

## **Part 5 of an Investigation of Papal Primacy**

### **30-50 AD**

In [Part 4](#), I said that:

"...it is reasonable to conclude that between 30 AD and 50 AD, between Pentecost and the Jerusalem Council, Peter had been pursuing his mission to the Jews and, according to Paul, his intention in 50 AD was to continue the way he had begun, as the Apostle to the Jews."

I further said that:

"...there is sufficient data in Acts and Paul's letter to the Galatians to situate Peter either in Jerusalem, or engaged on various missionary journeys in the regions of Judea, Samaria and Galilee, or finally in Antioch between 30 AD and 50 AD."

Before we attempt to discover [Peter's](#) possible whereabouts after 50 AD, we must first turn our attention to source material that militates against [Peter](#) being in Rome in the period immediately following the [Jerusalem Council](#).

## 50-54 AD

In [Part 4](#), we discovered that Gallio was proconsul of Achaia in late 52 AD. According to [Acts 18:11](#), Paul resided for 18 months in Corinth before he was brought before Gallio. Therefore, we can date his arrival in that city to early in 51 AD.

In [Acts 18:2](#) Paul meets Priscilla and Aquila in Corinth:

"There he met a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all the Jews to leave Rome."

Priscilla and Aquila, Jewish Christians, were already present in Corinth when Paul arrived there, having "*recently come from Italy*".

According to the Roman historian Suetonius, "*Since the Jews constantly made disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, he [Emperor Claudius] expelled them from Rome*". [Suetonius, *Life of Claudius*, 25:4] This expulsion of the Jews from Rome can be dated to 49 AD.

Most scholars agree that this statement does not refer directly to "Christ" or to an individual named "Chrestus", but most likely refers to Jewish Christian preachers who caused a disturbance among other Jews by proclaiming that "*Jesus is the Christ*". The edict probably did not apply to Gentile converts at all but, whatever the case, the expulsion order certainly applied to the Jewish Christians, Priscilla and Aquila, whom Paul met in Corinth in early 51 AD. Just like Priscilla and Aquila, Peter was a Jewish Christian and, if he were in Rome at that time, then he would certainly have been expelled with them.

The expulsion edict would have gone out of effect at the death of Claudius in AD 54 and since the following emperor (Nero) did not renew the edict, those expelled could have returned to Rome after 54 AD.

It is therefore reasonable to conclude that Peter did not go to Rome after the Jerusalem Council of 50 AD because of the Claudian edict. It is also reasonable to conclude that the earliest possible time that he could journey to Rome was after 54 AD when the edict lapsed.

## 54 - 62 AD

Material that militates against Peter journeying to Rome after 54 AD can be found in *Paul's letters* and in *Acts*.

In [Acts 2:9-10](#), we find that visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, were present at Pentecost and heard Peter preach that Jesus was their long-awaited Israelite Messiah. It is more than likely therefore that the gospel message was carried to Rome at a very early stage. However, on the question of when the Christian community in Rome was established, and by whom, the *New Testament* is silent.

When Paul writes to these Roman Christians circa 56-57 AD, it is at a time when Jewish Christians were trying to re-establish themselves in Rome after the Claudian edict had lapsed. We know, however, that the wider Christian community in Rome at that time was flourishing and well-established and, as Paul said, "*...your faith is proclaimed throughout the whole world*" i.e. where the gospel has been proclaimed in the provinces of the Roman Empire. [Rom. 1:8]

### Paul's purpose in going to Rome...

"I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong – that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith. I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that I planned many times to come to you (but have been prevented from doing so until now) in order that I might have a harvest among you, just as I have had among the other Gentiles." [Rom 1:11-13]

In [Romans Chapter 16](#),<sup>[1]</sup> we find a named list of Christians resident in Rome, including those of Priscilla and Aquila who must have returned to Rome after the Claudian edict had lapsed. Note that Paul does not directly greet these friends and co-workers, but rather has Christians pass on his greetings to one another. The purpose of this strategy is to establish contacts, build community support networks, and unify Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians as elsewhere in the letter it is obvious that there existed

some contentious issues between the parties. Conspicuously absent from this list of names is the one person we would most expect to find included if he were present in Rome, a unifying force par excellence, the man who knew **Jesus** face-to-face – **Peter the Apostle**.

### Westward Ho!

In *Romans Chapter 10*, **Paul** claims that he has been appointed by the **God of Israel** to preach to the **Gentiles**. He has already "*fully proclaimed the good news of Christ*" in the Eastern Mediterranean, having preached from "*Jerusalem as far around as Illyricum*", [north of **Macedonia** on the Adriatic] and he now intends to travel westwards to **Rome** and thence to **Spain**.

He must first, however, deliver to the "*saints*" in **Jerusalem** some poor relief resources collected from Christian communities in **Macedonia** and **Achaia**.

**Paul** arrives in **Jerusalem** circa 58 AD and meets with **James** and "all the elders" [Acts 21:17-18]. For our purposes, there is little to be gained by recounting **Paul's** subsequent tribulations, except to say that circumstances allowed him to witness to the gospel of the **God of Israel** before the Sanhedrin, before Roman Governors **Felix** and **Festus**, and before **Herod Agrippa**.

According to *Acts*, **Paul** was a Roman citizen by birth and this gave him the right to appeal directly to **Caesar** in any dispute over which he felt aggrieved. It was because **Paul** wished to avoid being handed over to his **Judean** opponents that he appealed to **Caesar** during his witness before **Festus** and **Herod Agrippa** in **Caesarea Maritima**. **Festus** and **Agrippa** both agreed that **Paul** was innocent of any crime and could have been set free if he had not appealed to **Caesar**. But appeal to **Caesar** he had, so to **Caesar** he must go. By the time **Paul** was handed over to the custody of the **Centurion Julius** and had boarded ship for Rome, he had spent about 18 months in detention in **Caesarea Maritima**.

After a harrowing sea voyage, **Paul** eventually arrived at **Puteoli** on the Gulf of Naples circa 60 AD. **Paul** stayed in **Puteoli** for a week, enough time for word of his arrival to spread to **Rome**, about 200 km distant. Upon receipt of this news, a number of Christian converts set out from the city along the **Appian Way** to meet **Paul**. Some travelled as far as **Appian Forum**, about 65 km from Rome, while others travelled a lesser distance to the **Three Taverns**, about 50 km from **Rome**.

**Paul** was greatly heartened by his enthusiastic welcome and the entire entourage proceeded towards the city.

### Paul and the Jews of Rome...

Upon his arrival, **Paul** along with a guard settled in a house for which **Paul** paid. Then:

"Three days later he called together the leaders of the Jews. When they had assembled, Paul said to them: 'My brothers, although I have done nothing against our people or against the customs of our ancestors, I was arrested in Jerusalem and handed over to the Romans. They examined me and wanted to release me, because I was not guilty of any crime deserving death. But when the Judeans objected, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar – not that I had any charge to bring against my own people. For this reason I have asked to see you and talk with you. It is because of the hope of Israel that I am bound with this chain.'"

"They replied, 'We have not received any letters from Judea concerning you, and none of the brothers who have come from there has reported or said anything bad about you. But we want to hear what your views are, for we know that people everywhere are talking against this sect.'" [Acts 28:17-22]

We can see from verses 21 and 22 that the leaders of the **Roman Jews** had received only negative reports about **Paul's** "sect" and expressed a wish to know more.

"They arranged to meet Paul on a certain day, and came in even larger numbers to the place where he was staying. From morning till evening he explained and declared to them the kingdom of God and tried to convince them about Jesus from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets. Some were convinced by what he said, but others would not believe..." [Acts 28:23-24]

Paul witnesses to these Jewish leaders for an entire day concerning the forthcoming Israelite religious/political theocracy to be established by **Israel's Messiah Jesus** whom the **God of Israel** had raised from the dead according to the Law and the Prophets.

Thus, prior to 60 AD, the **Jews of Rome** knew absolutely nothing about Paul's "sect", the "sect" which had been widely spoken against, resisted and rejected, the "sect" to which **Peter** also belonged.

Chapter 28, the conclusion of the *Book of Acts*, takes us forward to circa 62 AD, at which time **Paul** had been kept under "house arrest" for about two years at his own expense. During that period, he proclaimed the forthcoming religious/political theocracy [the Kingdom of God] and taught about the **Lord Jesus Messiah** unhindered. The *Book of Acts* ends on a positive note, claims **Paul's** preaching as a fulfillment of Scripture, still makes no mention of **Peter**, and lacks any hint of a coming Christian persecution at the hands of Roman authorities.

**Ascough and Malina** go on to say that a disproportionate number of deaths fell upon the lower rank residents of the villages and cities. We can see from this data that if **Peter** were still alive in 62 AD, as was **Paul**, he would have beaten the odds against him considerably.

How old would **Peter** have been in 62 AD? At the time he met **Jesus** around 28 AD, he was already married, was in a business partnership with **Andrew, James** and **John**, and was the owner of his own fishing boat. Even by the most generous estimates, **Peter** would have been at least in his late fifties and possibly much older in 62 AD so, given the terrible hardships of travel through the Mediterranean for anyone, let alone a person of advanced age by 1st century standards, I don't propose to go beyond this date in our quest for a **Roman Peter**.<sup>[3]</sup>

### Where oh where?

We arrived at the reasonable conclusion in **Part 4** that prior to the **Jerusalem Council** of 50 AD, **Peter** had preached the gospel only to the Jews living in **Judea, Galilee** and **Samaria**. He had also signaled his intention to **Paul** to continue the way he had begun – as the Apostle to the Jews.

We have outlined above some objections to **Peter's** presence in **Rome** between 50 and 62 AD. So, if it were not westwards to **Rome**, where amongst the many communities of **Diaspora Israelites** would **Peter** have been most likely to go in furtherance of his personal commission by **Jesus** to preach the gospel to the *"lost sheep of the House of Israel?"*

In the next installments we will finally attempt to provide a reasonable answer that question.

### FOOTNOTES:

[1] *Paul's letter to the Romans: a socio-rhetorical commentary*, Ben Witherington, Darlene Hyatt, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004, pp 4-5. [Although there has been some scholarly division over whether or not Chapter 16 was originally included in Paul's letter to the Romans, I find myself in agreement with Ben Witherington who argues in this first full-scale socio-rhetorical commentary on Romans that Chapter 16 is integral to the textual integrity of the letter.]

[2] *Lydia: Paul's Cosmopolitan Hostess (Paul's Social Network: Brothers and Sisters in Faith)* Richard S. Ascough, Bruce J. Malina, Liturgical Press, 2009, pp 43-44.

[3] Scholars are so divided on the question of whether all, some, or none of the so-called "prison epistles" – Philippians, Ephesians, Colossians and Philemon – were written from Rome during Paul's period of detention, i.e. between 60 and 62 AD, that there is little to be gained by entering into the arguments either for or against. Even more controversial are the so-called "pastoral epistles" – 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus – which posit a second Roman detention for Paul.

### Part 6 of an Investigation of Papal Primacy

Luckily this is "independent Catholic media" and we're not subject to any Nihil Obstats and Imprimaturs because today's commentary from **Vynette Holliday** challenges some very sacred Catholic cows. Buckle up, put on your crash helmet, and stand by for the reactions. Wouldn't it be just wonderful – and a sign of a vibrant Church again – if an article like this could bring

learned scholars defending the institutional position on a controversial issue into the public square to have a real conversation about these matters – to establish "the real truth" about foundational premises like the ones [Vynette](#) puts up for consideration.

### **Nailing her colors to the mast and testing your faith...**

Questions have been asked here on [Catholica](#) and elsewhere about the measure of importance Catholics today place on the truth or otherwise of the Papal claim to Universal Primacy and Apostolic Succession through the [Apostle Peter](#).

All the prerogatives, the titles, the honors, all that the Church has ever claimed for itself hang from this one single thread.

What could be more important than to determine its truth or otherwise, not only for ourselves, but for all our numberless ancestors who believed it absolutely, to the extent that some even died for it?

What if the Church is not the church of Jesus Christ by divine ordinance?

What if the Pope is not the Vicar of Christ and Pastor of the universal Church on earth by divine ordinance?

What if the Bishops are not the successors of the Apostles by divine ordinance?

What if the Church has never been the recipient of "divinely revealed truths" through the Holy Spirit?

What if, what if, what if...

I pursue this subject with such vigor because I believe that for every Catholic on earth, indeed every person on earth, nothing could be more fundamentally important. Consider the numberless millions of Catholics in Latin America, Africa, and Asia who believe that the Pope has the divinely ordained right to dictate to them about reproduction. Consider what overpopulation means for the future of this planet.

Having nailed my colors to the mast, I'll continue with our series.

### **The 1st Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians...**

Although it may be quite tedious for readers, I do think it important to deal with what is arguably the most important piece of alleged "evidence" upon which the Papacy relies for its claims to Universal Primacy through an early exercise of authority flowing from [Peter's](#) presence in Rome – i.e. the *1st Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians* written circa 96-100 AD.

Catholic apologists call upon this Epistle time after time and it was recently given an airing by [Pope Benedict XVI](#) himself in this [Zenit](#) report from 2007:

"Already in the first century, popes exercised their primacy over the other Churches, [Benedict XVI](#) says.

The Holy Father explained this on Wednesday at the general audience, which he dedicated to [Pope St. Clement of Rome](#), the third successor of Peter.

Speaking to some 16,000 people gathered both in Paul VI Hall and St. Peter's Basilica, the Pontiff began a new series of catecheses on the Apostolic Fathers.

[Benedict XVI](#) mentioned that Clement's Letter to the Corinthians was given "[a]n almost canonical characteristic."

The letter noted that the Church of Corinth was experiencing severe divisions. "The priests of the community, in fact, had been deposed by some young upstarts," the Holy Father said.

And quoting St. Irenaeus, he explained the context of Clement's letter: "[t]he Church of Rome sent the Corinthians a very important letter to reconcile them in peace to renew their faith and to announce the tradition, a tradition they had so newly received from the apostles."

Benedict XVI continued: "Therefore we could say that [Clement's letter] is a first exercise of a Primate of Rome after the death of St. Peter."

He added that the letter "opened to the Bishop of Rome the possibility for vast intervention on the identity of the Church and its mission." [1]

Pope Benedict makes two major claims in his address:

"Pope St Clement of Rome" was the third successor of Peter.

The *1st Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians* proves that in the first century AD, popes already exercised their primacy over other churches.

We have been dealing with Peter's alleged Roman ministry in other commentaries in this series, so we only deal with Claim 1 in the context of this *Epistle*.

### A closer look at the 1st Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians...

Towards the end of the first century AD, an upsurge of factionalism in the congregation at Corinth caused a divisiveness and resentment that resulted in widespread embarrassment to other Christian congregations. The Roman congregation wrote a letter to the Corinthian congregation pleading that they settle their differences reminding them that the essence of the teachings of Jesus was love and humility.

Keep the following points in mind:

The Epistle is anonymous. Therefore we know nothing about its author. Later tradition asserts it was written by a man named "Clement".

The author is not named as head of the church in Rome.

Nowhere does the author assert the primacy of Rome over other churches. On the contrary, the author makes his appeal to the Corinthians on the values of self-abasement, humility and love, as did Jesus in his sermons. *"For Christ is with them that are lowly of mind, not with them that exalt themselves over the flock"* [1Clem 16:1]

The author does not appeal to his own authority, or to that of his congregation, but to Rome's and Corinth's mutually recognized authority of scripture, from which he quotes copiously to reinforce his arguments.

For the writer of I Clement, the presbyteral college form of church government is normative and proper. The restoration of the Corinthian presbyters so that the faithful transmission of apostolic teaching is secured is the most important purpose in writing.

There is a broad consensus among scholars that *1 Clement* does not establish the Primacy of the Church in Rome, or the succession of bishops from the Apostle Peter.

I have chosen from amongst these scholars the following crucial observations from Peter Lampe's masterful work *Christians at Rome in the First Two Centuries: From Paul to Valentinus*:

"Before the middle of the second century in Rome, at no time did one single prominent person pass on the tradition: this was done by a plurality of presbyters ... at the time that Rome experiences the development of a monarchical episcopacy, a twelve-member list of names going back to the apostles is constructed ... the presence of a monarchical bearer of tradition is projected back into the past..."

"The list of Irenaeus [Haer.3.3.3] is with highest probability a historical construction from the 180's when the monarchical episcopacy developed in Rome. Above all, the framework of "apostolic" twelve members [from Linus to Eleutherus] points in the direction of a fictive construction. The names that were woven into the construction were certainly not freely invented but were borrowed from the tradition of the city of Rome [for example "Clement" or the brother of Hermas, "Pius"]. They had belonged to presbyters of Roman church history. These persons, however, would never have understood themselves as monarchical leaders - especially Pius at the time of Hermas." [2]

Peter Lampe demonstrates that the purpose of this list was to anchor the then current doctrine with a successive chain of authorities back to the apostles and not to prove a succession of monarchical bishops. Peter Lampe's account makes fascinating reading.

It is important to keep in mind that the historical claims of the Papacy rest entirely on Peter's alleged death in Rome and the mention of both Peter and Paul in Chapter 5 of the *Epistle* has been put forward at times in support of these claims.

### J.B. Lightfoot's translation of Chapter 5

"But, to pass from the examples of ancient days, let us come to those champions who lived nearest to our time. Let us set before us the noble examples which belong to our generation. By reason of jealousy and envy the greatest and most righteous pillars of the Church were persecuted, and contended even unto death. Let us set before our eyes the good Apostles.

"There was Peter who by reason of unrighteous jealousy endured not one but many labors, and thus having borne his testimony went to his appointed place of glory. By reason of jealousy and strife Paul by his example pointed out the prize of patient endurance. After that he had been seven times in bonds, had been driven into exile, had been stoned, had preached in the East and in the West, he won the noble renown which was the reward of his faith, having taught righteousness unto the whole world and having reached the farthest bounds of the West; and when he had borne his testimony before the rulers, so he departed from the world and went unto the holy place, having been found a notable pattern of patient endurance."

In the words "*There was Peter who by reason of unrighteous jealousy endured not one but many labors, and thus having borne his testimony went to his appointed place of glory,*" is found evidence that Peter was martyred in Rome.

Although the apostles are bracketed together, the Epistle makes it as a distinguishing circumstance of Paul that he preached both in the East and West, implying that Peter never was in the West.

Only a determinedly preconceived motive could possibly extract from the *First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians* one shred of evidence that Peter died in Rome, or that the "*Primate of Rome*" exercised authority over other churches in the 1st Century. Even Benedict's use of the term "*Primate of Rome*" is anachronistic as the monarchical episcopate was not in existence at the time of writing, either in Rome or in Corinth.

Despite all evidence to the contrary, the Papacy continues to repeat the age-old mantra of **Universal Primacy and Apostolic Succession through the Apostle Peter** because Peter was allegedly martyred in Rome:

"In Peter's person, mission and ministry, in his presence and death in Rome attested by the most ancient literary and archaeological tradition - the Church sees a deeper reality essentially related to her own mystery of communion and salvation: "*Ubi Petrus, ibi ergo Ecclesia*". From the beginning and with increasing clarity, the Church has understood that, just as there is a succession of the Apostles in the ministry of Bishops, so too the ministry of unity entrusted to Peter belongs to the permanent structure of Christ's Church and that this succession is established in the see of his martyrdom." [3]

**Note:** This *Epistle* is a sort of poisoned chalice for the Church. On the one hand, as a genuine piece of early correspondence from one Christian community to another, the Church must hang upon this slender thread its monumental claims to **Papal Primacy**. On the other hand, however, the *Epistle* reflects none of the Church's superimposed later dogmas. The author refers to "*Jesus Christ the High Priest by whom our gifts are offered*", and nowhere is **Jesus** considered to be divine, virgin-born, or part of any "Trinity". **Jesus** is always presented simply as a man of God.

**FOOTNOTES:**

[1] *Benedict XVI Highlights 1st Century Papal Primacy*, Vatican City, March 8, 2007 (Zenit.org)

[2] Peter Lampe, *Christians at Rome in the First Two Centuries: From Paul to Valentinus*, Continuum Publishing, 2006, pp 405-406.

[3] *The Primacy of the Successor of Peter in the Mystery of the Church : Reflections of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith*, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, Prefect. Tarcisio Bertone, Archbishop emeritus of Vercelli, Secretary. *Il Primato del Successore di Pietro*, Atti del Simposio teologico, Rome, 2-4 December 1996, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Vatican City, 1998.

**Vynette Holliday** has been a frequent contributor to the *Catholica Forum* for the past 18 months. She is resident in Brisbane where she was born and educated by the Brigidine Sisters. She has a background in the Classics, Ancient and Modern History and Ancient Semitic Languages including Biblical Hebrew and the Canaanite language Ugarit. She regards herself as extremely fortunate in that she was given the opportunity of studying Biblical Hebrew under two rabbis, and under the acclaimed authority Professor Francis Anderson. **Vynette** worked for many years in Education Queensland and at the University of Queensland in an administrative capacity. She has also worked in a voluntary capacity for an Australian museum on projects ranging from investigations into the lives and deaths of the renowned pioneer aviators, Sir Charles Kingsford Smith and Bert Hinkler, through to research into the establishment of the Royal Flying Doctor Service. Her contributions in this field are noted in newspapers of the day and in the publications, *The Last Flight of Bert Hinkler* and *The Life and Times of Sir Charles Kingsford Smith*, both by internationally-renowned aviation historian E. P.(Ted) Wixted. **Vynette** is now officially retired but spends nearly all of her time writing.