Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)

Gospel text (*Mt* 16:13-20): Jesus went into the region of Caesarea Philippi and he asked his disciples... "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter said in reply, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus said to him in reply, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father. And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven..."

The Pope is not a "dictator"

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Today, we are thankful to God for the person of the Roman Pontiff, successor of St. Peter. The Pope —endorsing the words that Simon heard— is elected to confirm his brothers in the faith. And so, he receives a distinct assistance of the Holy Spirit. All this was evident in Caesarea Philippi: it was Simon Peter who, through a revelation from the Father, publicly and accurately confessed the Divinity of Christ.

He has "received" the primacy of the Church. We say "received" because it is an assignment. The Pope has supreme and full authority, but not to do what he may deem convenient: he is not a "dictator" but he must be the guarantor of obedience. He stands for Christ: he is His visible head. He stands for the Revelation: he is Its custodian. He stands for Truth: he is Its teacher. He advocates for his brothers: he is the Holy Father! He is the "servant of the servants of God".

—God, the Holy Spirit, please preserve, fortify and defend the Pope.