

## What My Grandpa Said About The Pope: A Story

My grandpa is a nice old gentleman, with gray hair, and gold spectacles, and very fond of his little grandson Billy—that's me. Grandpa and I often go out to walk together, that is, on fine days, because on cloudy days he never goes out of the house, but stays at home to keep "comfortable with the gout", as he says. One day we strolled along the edge of the woods and into the park, and after walking about for a while we sat down on a nice sunny bench. Grandpa took out a newspaper to read. As his eye glanced down the columns, he suddenly gave a grunt and hit the ground very sharply with his cane.

"Got the gout, Grandpa?" I asked.

"No, my dear, it's nothing but the old Pope again."

"Who is he, Grandpa?" I enquired.

"I am sorry to say he's a bad man, and always has been my dear," replied Grandpa, looking at me over his spectacles."

"Why don't the police pick him up then, and put him in jail?" I asked.

"Because there are so many people that think he is a good man," answered my grandpa, "and as for trying him, Billy, there's been plenty of that, if you only understood it; but as often as he is brought up in court, the fewer witnesses you can get to appear against him, and he always manages to come away not guilty."

"How many people believe he is a good man, Grandpa?" I asked. "Probably ten or twelve?"

"A dozen!" laughed the old gentleman, "see here," and he commenced drawing figures on the sandy path with his cane. "There," said he pointing to his numbers scratched in the sand, "what do you think of that?"

"There's a '1' with nine zeroes after it, I said, "Why, Grandpa, that's over a billion people!"

"That's about it, my dear."

I thought it was rather funny that so many people could not find out that he was a bad man, and said so; to which my grandpa answered:

"It's because they are all blind and superstitious Billy."

"Are these people really that stupid, Grandpa? What kind of people can they be?" I

asked.

“They are called Catholics, my dear.”

“Oh! I know,” I said, “I heard Pastor Roland preach about them, and that’s what Mr. Andrews became when he left our church. Why don’t you tell him, Grandpa, that the Pope is a bad man?”

“No use in that,” he replied; “he would only laugh at your grandpa, and tell him just what I have told you, that there are over a billion people who believe the Pope to be a good man; nearly four times as many as all us Protestants together who think he is bad.”

“What makes the Pope a bad man?” I asked, “did he steal something?”

“Yes, my dear Billy,” answered Grandpa, banging his cane down with each word, “he stole too much power and authority, and made himself the so-called head of the Christian Church over the whole world.”

“But,” I said, scratching my little head, “why don’t some of the billion people find out he is not the head of the Church, and tell the rest of the people?”

“They could not find out that he *is not*, when he actually *is* now, could they, little whipper-snapper?”

“I don’t mean that, Grandpa,” said I, “but why don’t they find out that he has no right to be the head of the Church, and find out when he stole all the power and authority?”

“Because nobody knows when or how he did it.”

“How do you know it then, Grandpa?”

Grandpa was suddenly seized with a violent fit of coughing, which made him very red in the face. I was afraid he was having a heart attack. My grandpa is rather fat, and has a short neck; and short-necked fat people always die of heart attacks, you know. In my fear I forgot all about the Pope, and ran to the drinking fountain to get some water for him, when who should come along but Mr. Andrews himself, whom we had just been talking about.

“Oh Mr. Andrews!” I cried out, “my Grandpa is very bad! Come quick!” Mr. Andrews looked over at my grandpa coughing on the bench; he cautiously said hello. Grandpa had stopped coughing and looked just fine now. Mr. Andrews smiled down at me, and said:

“Your Grandpa is not bad, little Billy, but very good, as everybody knows.”

“Oh! I don’t mean he’s a bad grandpa,” I responded, “but I thought he was going to die of a heart attack when I asked him about that bad man, the Pope.”

My grandpa didn't know quite how to respond so he said, "Little Inquisitive here. He's been asking me about the Pope, and I told him what I firmly believe, Mr. Andrews, that the Pope assumes an unfounded authority over the Christian world, and that it's a wicked assumption. How could you, brought up in this enlightened country, and in an Evangelical church to boot, submit yourself to it?"

"Simply because I found out that (contrary to what you and I were taught in our early days) the Pope not only is, but always was the visible head, and earthly governor of the Christian Church; and that not until a comparatively late date in history was it ever doubted. To be called a Christian and acknowledge the Bishop of Rome as the chief pastor of Christ's flock was one and the same thing. So after some research I concluded that I must either submit myself to his pastoral authority or be cut off from the Christian Church altogether."

"You had plenty of Christian Churches you could join without coming to that silly conclusion," growled my grandpa.

"You are right, there are plenty that call themselves the Christian church, over twenty-eight thousand to be exact," replied Mr. Andrews, "but Jesus Christ told us there should only be one fold, and one shepherd" (Jn 10:16).

"I know" said my grandpa, "that those words about the 'one flock' seem to condemn us Protestants outright, but you see the truth is, no matter how many divisions there are, we're all Christians, and Jesus Christ is our one shepherd."

"All alike in theory maybe, if you will," said Mr. Andrews, "but surely you won't pretend to say that the Christian religion as Catholics believe it, and the Christian religion as Protestants believe it is just alike?"

"Of course not. Heaven forbid!" gasped Grandpa, "Our blessed Reformers cut us loose from your doctrines and your Pope too, and we escaped from your slavery, sir."

"Grandpa," I asked, "why didn't everybody run away too?"

"Ha! ha!" laughed Grandpa, "very good! ha! ha! V e r y good, Billy; and left the old Pope all by himself! That's a capital idea!"

Mr. Andrews pointed over in the direction of the hillside, and said: "I'm afraid we'd all be in the same predicament as those sheep over on the hillside if they took it into their silly heads to run off from their shepherd."

My grandpa stopped laughing at this, and his face went blank, at least I thought so.

"St. Paul says," continued Mr. Andrews, "that Christ is not divided," and it is plain that the Church ought not to be divided, as you admit it is. *'One Lord, One Faith, One*

*Baptism,*' says St. Paul again (1 Cor 1:18; Eph 4:5). Now we Catholics are all under Christ, have one faith, and one baptism; and we are all in one church, governed by one head, but you Protestants are divided not only from us, but even among yourselves, with multitudes of faiths, different baptisms, acknowledging no head of your churches, and for ever quarreling and competing among yourselves."

"I admit you have the Scripture on your side," said my grandpa, "but then you push it too far, my dear Mr. Andrews. There is Peter's name, now, which just because it happened to mean a rock, and because our Lord said He would build His Church on a rock, you say that He must have meant Peter."

"I beg your pardon," answered Mr. Andrews, "his name did not happen to be Peter, but Simon: and Jesus specifically changed it to Cephas, which is, interpreted, Peter, or Rock, as the Scripture says, because He meant to make him the foundation rock of the visible Church (Jn 1:42; Mt 16:18). Cephas, you know, is Aramaic for rock, and Peter is Greek for rock. But it is plain our Lord made St. Peter the head pastor over his flock, for He said, 'Simon, son of John, feed my sheep, tend my lambs'; and you cannot deny that He said to St. Peter, 'I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven'" (Mt 16:19; Jn 21:15-17).

"No," replied my grandpa, "I don't deny it, because it is in the Holy Bible plain enough, but I don't believe the Pope has got them, the keys that is."

"Who else does then?" asked Mr. Andrews.

"Nobody has, and nobody wants them," answered Grandpa, rather gruffly.

"What use did St. Peter make of them, and what did he do with them when he was martyred?"

"I don't know, and I don't care"; and Grandpa, and when he said that, took up his newspaper again as if he did not wish to talk any further with Mr. Andrews. I was very anxious to know who had the keys of the kingdom of heaven, as any little boy would be, so I asked Mr. Andrews if he knew, and what St. Peter did with them. "St. Peter had the keys of the kingdom of the kingdom of heaven because he was the first head of the Church, and whoever is head of the Church in St. Peter's place must have them now," said Mr. Andrews.

"That is the Lord and Savior, my son, and not the Pope," said my grandpa.

"Why, grandpa, didn't you say the Pope was the head of the Church now, only he had no right to be?"

"Hold your tongue boy," retorted my grandpa, "hold your tongue. What do you know about theology?" He then turned to Mr. Andrews (and I was glad he did, for that big word "theology" quite frightened me), and said:

“My dear Mr. Andrews, why can’t you Catholics get along without any man as the head of your Church?”

“Because,” replied Mr. Andrews, “nothing can get along in this world without a head. A headless Church would be as ungovernable, as shaky and as liable to go to pieces as a state, or a family, or an orchestra, or an army, or any other association without a head. Even Protestants have “heads” or pastors for each of their ‘churches’ to keep order and lead the flock. In principle there is no difference.”

“But I don’t want any such human head in my religion,” said my grandpa. “I want to be able to decide things for myself, to be my own head and-”

“Your own Pope,” interjected Mr. Anderson.

“And do my own thinking,” continued my grandpa, not noticing the interruption.

“And so you get what you’ve gotten,” said Mr. Andrews, “as many religions and sects as you have heads to think.”

“And you have given up being an enlightened and free American and Evangelical, and you let the Pope do your thinking for you, eh?” said my grandpa sneeringly.

“Not at all!” answered Mr. Andrews. “The Pope is as much obliged to believe and obey the same one, holy, Catholic, and apostolic truth, as it was first taught by Jesus Christ, ‘the faith once delivered to the saints’ (Jude 3), as I am, or the least one of the over one billion Christians who acknowledge him as their spiritual pastor. A truth, moreover, to which neither the Pope, nor even the whole Church can either add any thing new, or take anything away. And as for freedom, friend Simon,” (Simon is my grandpa’s name), “I have never known what it is to be truly free in my faith, though at one time like you I thought I did, until I became a Catholic; for I am now bound to the opinions of no man or set of men, but only to those sure and settled universal principles and truths which the whole Church is bound to, and has always believed in every age of Christianity. Outside of these, I can believe as I will, and I’m bound only by common sense and decency. ‘You shall know the truth,’ said our Lord, ‘and the truth shall make you free’. The Church has always been faithful to preserve the truth of the Lord Jesus and His apostles.”

“I must say, Mr. Andrews, that you put things in rather a new light for me; and if what you say is true, it is worth thinking over,” said my grandpa.

“Yes, it is worth thinking over, Mr. Simon,” and with that Mr. Andrews dipped his hat and bid my grandpa and I a “Good morning,” and walked on.

My grandpa seemed to lose interest in his newspaper, folded it up, and we returned home. As we walked along he kept talking to himself and appeared to get so agitated that I was afraid the gout was rapidly coming on. When we arrived at the door of our house, we saw

old Mick Mooney chopping up a load of wood on the sidewalk. My grandpa stopped right before Mick and he asked:

“Mick, who is the head of the Church?”

“Jesus Christ, sir, and visibly, the Pope who represents him as pastor, your honor, bless his holy reverence,” replied Mick.

“But,” said Grandpa, “*our* church has no Pope. What is the use of your Church having one?”

“How could we ever know the difference between Catholic and Protestant then?” asked Mick.

“I don’t understand you,” said my grandpa.

“Sure, if it wasn’t for the Pope, the Protestants might be calling themselves Catholics, and pretty soon everyone in the Catholic Church would be going off in a billion directions and lose their way. Then no one would know who was in the true fold at all, and no one would be there to direct them, begging your permission, sir.”

“But the Bible,” said Grandpa, “could tell you, Mick, better than the Pope too, whether you were of the fold of Christ or not.”

“I’m afraid not sir, begging your pardon,” replied Mick. “For there are lots of Protestants, very fair and wonderful folks they are too, honorable gentlemen, but the Bible don’t seem to tell them.”

“Why, Mick,” said my grandpa, “you talk as if you thought all us Protestants were out of the true Church because we don’t submit to the Pope. You might as well say we are all heathens for the same reason.”

“I believe,” said Mick humbly, “that our Savior said something like that, too. ‘He that will not hear the Church, let him be to you as a heathen and a publican’, and St. Paul, bless his soul, said the Church was the ‘pillar and foundation of the truth’ (1 Tim 2:15.), whereas I would suspect that you, Mr. Simon, would probably give those honors to the Bible alone.”

“The Church. Oh! yes, well, um,” said my grandpa. “Very true, but the Church is not the Pope.”

“You’re kidding me, right Mr. Simon, you’re just joking around.” answered Mick, with a curious look on his face, “You couldn’t *hear* the Church, I’m thinking, if the Church didn’t speak, and how is she to speak without a head and a mouth?”

“There’s some truth in that,” said my grandpa. “And I guess the Pope is the pastor of the

Catholic Church. In principle, I can't argue because I don't know of any Protestant church that doesn't also have a pastor to lead it."

My grandpa thought deeply for awhile and then said, "Come, Billy, the Pope has been in court again, and came out 'not guilty' again, as usual;" and taking my hand, he led me into the house, and into the living room and sat down.

"Now," he said, turning to me, "you see now what has become of your bad old Pope, little Billy?"

I began to tremble, for I was afraid something very dreadful had happened to the Pope, yet I managed to stammer out "Dear Grandpa! what has happened to him?"

"Why, just this, that your stupid old gouty grandpa is very much inclined to think that those *one billion* Catholics may not be so stupid after all. They may be right after all; and-" he continued, going to the window, and waving his cane like he was yelling to someone in the street-"what a blind old fool I have been, like a old mole, not to have seen this all before. We must thank God for His mercy and compassion, even for a gouty old man like me!"

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