Many people confidently repeat a phrase that sounds devastating: *“The papacy does not appear in the Bible.”*
But it only takes opening the Scriptures honestly — and reading them together with the history of the Church — to discover something astonishing: the Bible not only presents Peter as the visible head of the Church, but even mentions some of his successors in Rome.

Yes.
Scripture mentions Peter, Linus, and Clement. Exactly the first three bishops of Rome recognized by Apostolic Tradition.

- Peter → Matthew 16:18
- Linus → 2 Timothy 4:21
- Clement → Philippians 4:3

The problem was never a lack of evidence.
The problem is that many try to read the Bible separated from the Church that preserved it, transmitted it, and defined it.

And here appears one of the greatest contradictions of modern Christianity: accepting the biblical canon defined by the Church… while denying the authority of that same Church.

Because the Bible did not fall from heaven already bound in black leather with an index and verse numbers.
There were centuries of preaching, persecutions, martyrs, bishops, councils, and apostolic succession before the New Testament existed as we know it today.

The great question is not whether the papacy appears in the Bible.
The real question is:

Can the Church founded by Christ exist without a visible authority safeguarding the unity of the faith?

Christ Did Not Found a “Free Christianity”: He

Founded a Church

Many imagine Jesus simply leaving behind a book for everyone to interpret according to their own conscience.
But that is not what the Gospels show.

Christ founded a visible, concrete Church with authority and hierarchy.

He did not say:

> *“Go, and let each person interpret the Scriptures however he wishes.”*

He said:

> *“He who hears you hears Me.” (Luke 10:16)*

And also:

> *“If he refuses to listen even to the Church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.” (Matthew 18:17)*

The Church appears as doctrinal authority even before the complete New Testament existed.

This completely changes the perspective.

The apostles did not evangelize by handing out printed Bibles.
They evangelized by orally preaching the faith received from Christ.

Saint Paul makes this absolutely clear:

> *“Therefore, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by letter.”*
> *— 2 Thessalonians 2:15*

The word “traditions” here does not mean human inventions or customs.
It refers to the deposit of apostolic faith transmitted by the Church.

Peter: The Visible Rock of the Church

The central text is impossible to ignore.

Matthew 16:18–19

> *“And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven…”*

Something extraordinary happens here.

Christ:

- changes Simon’s name to Peter,
- gives him the keys,
- and entrusts him with a singular authority.

In the Bible, changing someone’s name signifies a divine mission:

- Abram → Abraham
- Jacob → Israel
- Simon → Peter

This is not a decorative detail.

The name “Peter” comes from *Kepha* (rock).
Christ is establishing a visible foundation for the unity of His Church.

The keys: a symbol of royal authority

Many overlook the biblical meaning of the keys.

In Isaiah 22:22 we read about the royal steward of the Davidic kingdom:

> *“And I will place on his shoulder the key of the house of David…”*

The king had a visible administrator governing in his absence.

Christ — Son of David and eternal King — uses exactly the same language with Peter.

This is not accidental.
It is a structure of spiritual government.

Peter Acts as the Visible Head Throughout the New Testament

After Matthew 16, Peter constantly appears exercising leadership.

Peter speaks first

At Pentecost:

- Peter preaches the first sermon (Acts 2).

In the first public miracle:

- Peter acts in the apostolic name (Acts 3).

Before the Sanhedrin:

- Peter answers on behalf of all (Acts 4).

In the case of Ananias and Sapphira:

- Peter exercises disciplinary authority (Acts 5).

At the Council of Jerusalem:

- Peter gives the decisive speech (Acts 15).

Even when James speaks afterward, he does so based upon Peter’s prior doctrinal intervention.

The structure is evident:

- Peter confirms,
- the others collaborate.

This is precisely the Catholic understanding of Petrine primacy.

“Feed My Sheep”: Christ’s Final Mandate

In John 21:15–17, the risen Jesus entrusts Peter with a unique mission:

> *“Feed My lambs… tend My sheep…”*

Christ does not say this to all the apostles in the same way.

Peter receives a universal pastoral mission.

And here is something extremely important:

the sheep still belong to Christ, not to Peter.

The Pope does not replace Christ.
The Pope is the visible vicar of Christ on earth.

Catholicism has never taught that the Pope is sinless, perfect, or divine.

Catholic doctrine teaches something far more humble and profound:
Christ protects His Church from officially falling into definitive doctrinal error.

Linus and Clement: The Successors Are Also in the Bible

This is where many people become surprised.

Linus in 2 Timothy 4:21

Saint Paul writes:

> *“Eubulus sends greetings to you, as do Pudens and Linus and Claudia and all the brethren.”*

That “Linus” is recognized by the early Church as Peter’s immediate successor in Rome.

He is not a secondary figure invented centuries later.

The first Christians knew perfectly well about the continuity of the Roman episcopate.

Clement in Philippians 4:3

Saint Paul mentions:

> *“…and Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers…”*

That Clement has been identified since antiquity with Pope Clement I.

And here something historically fascinating happens.

At the end of the first century, the Church in Corinth experienced serious internal problems. Who intervened to restore order?

Rome.

Clement wrote an authoritative letter to the Corinthians even while the Apostle John was still alive.

This demonstrates something enormous:
the Church of Rome was already exercising moral and doctrinal authority over other Churches from apostolic times.

Apostolic Succession: The Great Theme Many Avoid

Biblical Christianity was never individualistic.

The apostles transmitted authority through the laying on of hands.

Acts 1: Judas is replaced

When Judas falls, the apostles do not say:

> *“We no longer need replacements.”*

They choose Matthias to occupy his ministry.

The mission continues.

2 Timothy 2:2

Saint Paul tells Timothy:

> *“What you have heard from me… entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”*

Here we see four generations:

- Paul
- Timothy
- faithful men
- others after them

That is apostolic succession.

Not a faith constantly reinventing itself.

“Sola Scriptura” and Its Fundamental Problem

The Protestant doctrine of “sola scriptura” claims that the Bible alone is the only infallible authority.

But a devastating question arises:

Where does the Bible teach “sola scriptura”?

Nowhere.

In fact, the Bible teaches the opposite:

- oral tradition,
- apostolic authority,
- succession,
- a visible Church.

Furthermore, “sola scriptura” creates an impossible problem to solve:

Who defined which books belong in the Bible?

The Bible does not contain an inspired table of contents.

It was the councils of the Church that discerned the canon.

And then the contradiction appears:

- they accept the canon defined by the Church,
- yet reject the authority of the Church that defined it.

It is like trusting a mother to identify her child… and then claiming that the mother has no authority whatsoever.

The Biblical Canon Did Not Fall from Heaven

For centuries there were debates regarding:

- Hebrews,
- Revelation,
- James,
- Jude,
- and other books.

The Church discerned under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The Councils of Hippo and Carthage helped establish the canon later recognized by all Christendom.

This destroys the idea of a self-sufficient Bible separated from the Church.

Because before there was a defined New Testament:
there were already sacraments,
there were already bishops,
there was already liturgy,
there was already apostolic authority.

The Church produced the biblical canon; the canon did not produce the Church.

Why Does This Matter Today?

Many sincere Christians deeply love Christ, yet live in a context of doctrinal fragmentation.

Thousands of denominations interpret the Bible in contradictory ways regarding:

- baptism,
- the Eucharist,
- salvation,
- morality,
- divorce,
- authority,
- sacraments.

And all of them quote verses.

Yet Christ prayed:

> *“That they may all be one.”*

> *— John 17:21*

Visible unity is not an optional detail.

The papacy exists precisely to safeguard that unity.

Not as a human political monarchy, but as a spiritual service of communion.

The Pope Is Not the Center: Christ Is

Here it is important to avoid caricatures.

Authentic Catholicism does not teach worship of the Pope.

The Pope:

- does not replace Christ,
- does not create new truths,
- is not above the Gospel.

His role is to faithfully guard the deposit received.

As Saint Vincent of Lérins said:

> *“To preserve what has been believed everywhere, always, and by all.”*

The mission of the Pope is to preserve, not reinvent.

History Confirms What the Bible Suggests

The early Church Fathers continually speak about Roman primacy.

Saint Ignatius of Antioch (1st–2nd century)

He recognizes the special authority of the Church of Rome.

Saint Irenaeus (2nd century)

He affirms that every Church must agree with Rome because of its preeminent authority.

Saint Cyprian

He calls Rome:

> *“The chair of Peter.”*

This was not a medieval invention.

The awareness of Roman primacy existed from primitive Christianity itself.

The Real Modern Problem: Rejecting All Authority

The current crisis is not only theological.
It is cultural.

We live in an age suspicious of every authority:

- family authority,

- moral authority,
- doctrinal authority,
- spiritual authority.

Modern man wants a Christianity without obedience, without dogmas, and without mediation.

But Christ founded exactly the opposite:
a visible, sacramental, and apostolic Church.

And this does not enslave the believer.

It protects him.

Because without stable doctrinal authority, each person ultimately becomes his own “pope,” interpreting the faith according to emotions, trends, or ideologies.

The Church Guarded the Faith While the World Changed

Empires fell.
Kingdoms disappeared.
Ideologies rose and died.

But apostolic succession continued.

From Peter until today there exists a visible historical line of bishops of Rome.

We are not speaking about an abstract idea.
We are speaking about concrete historical continuity.

That does not mean every pope has been a saint.
The Bible never promises flawless saints in every generation.

What it promises is something different:
divine assistance so that the Church will neither disappear nor officially teach error as definitive truth.

A Final Reflection: The Bible and the Church Were Never Separated

The great modern error is trying to oppose:

- Bible against Church,
- Scripture against Tradition,
- Christ against apostolic authority.

But in original Christianity these realities were inseparable.

The Church transmitted the Scriptures.
Scripture was born within the Church.
And apostolic succession protects the correct interpretation of the faith.

Therefore, when someone says:

> *“There are no popes in the Bible,”*

the answer is not merely to show verses.

The true answer is to understand that the Bible itself was born within a visible, apostolic, and hierarchical Church.

Peter is there.
Linus is there.
Clement is there.

And behind them stands something even deeper:

Christ’s promise to remain with His Church until the end of time.

> *“And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”*
> *— Matthew 28:20*