

Sunday Message

21ST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

THE WORD

Year A • 27 August 2023 • Psalter Week 1

Jesus struggled with many things during his ministry, but one of the common threads that runs through the parables and Gospel scenes is the difficulty people had in identifying him as the Son of God, the Messiah.

He would perform miracles and preach of a kingdom where people would be greeted with the love and mercy of God, and yet, people still questioned his authority.

Today's Gospel is a teaching exercise for the disciples. It is time for Jesus to claim his true identity and he needs his followers to understand. 'Who do people say the Son of God is?' he asks. The answers that come back to him are varied. Some still identify Elijah, Jeremiah or John the Baptist as the Son of God. But Peter is confident today. He steps forward and is unequivocal in his announcement, 'You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.' This statement from Peter is interesting as he has witnessed many of Jesus' acts of healing and miracles. He is convinced that the man he has been following and watching closely, is the Son of God. The future direction of the Church will rest on Peter's shoulders and Jesus says. 'You are Peter and on this rock I will build my Church.' Peter will go on to tell the world of the Messiah who brought healing, love and compassion to everyone he met on the way. ■

SAY

Lord, God, you call us.
You come to us with your commandment.
And you ask our commitment.
We offer you our hands to serve the needs of the poor.
We offer you our voices to speak out against injustices.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.
(Peace Church, Munich)

DO

Read today's gospel story again and reflect on the challenge placed upon Peter's shoulders. How can we help in this task of building a Church that has mercy and love as its foundation?

'WHO DO YOU SAY I AM?'

(MATTHEW 16: 13-20)



St. Peter's Square from Rome in Vatican State

REFLECT

Standing in St Peter's Square in Vatican City can be an awe-inspiring activity. From the centre of the square, you can catch a glimpse of the papal apartments, the doors of St. Peter's Basilica, the large queues of tourists awaiting entry to see Michelangelo's 'Pietà' and other sights of beauty that can capture the imagination. After absorbing the hustle and bustle of life around this sacred place, one can also get a true sense of the wonder of church tradition – a Church that began two thousand years ago with the apostle Peter at its helm. A Church that has maintained the connection between our current pope and our first pope. A church that continues to grow and continues to pray to the Messiah, who is love.

When Peter received today's task from Jesus, one can only imagine the feelings that went through his mind. We know that Peter's journey with Jesus wasn't always straight forward. He refused to believe Jesus' prediction that death and new life will be part of Christ's path. When death does come for Jesus, Peter and his followers are nowhere to be found. And in the days following Easter Sunday, Peter and those close to him will still be in hiding. Jesus will have to revisit Peter at a later date to reiterate the importance of his role as leader of the Church and preacher of the Word.

We are reminded today that we too have a responsibility to carry on the traditions of the Church, handed on to us by the disciples. Like Peter, we need the encouragement of Jesus through prayer, to help us in our task. ■

LEARN

'Often the Church has been called the building of God. The Lord himself compared himself to the stone which the builders rejected, but which was made into the cornerstone. On this foundation, the Church is built by the apostles.....As living stones, we here on earth are built into it.' (*Lumen Gentium*, 6)

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Turn your ear, O Lord, and answer me;
save the servant who trusts in you, my God.
Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I cry to you all
the day long.

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

COLLECT

O God, who cause the minds of the faithful
to unite in a single purpose,
grant your people to love what you command
and to desire what you promise,
that, amid the uncertainties of this world,
our hearts may be fixed on that place
where true gladness is found.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of
the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

FIRST READING

Isaiah 22:19-23

A reading from the prophet Isaiah.

Thus says the Lord of hosts to Shebna, the
master of the palace: I dismiss you from your
office, I remove you from your post, and the
same day I call on my servant Eliakim son
of Hilkiyah. I invest him with your robe, gird
him with your sash, entrust him with your
authority; and he shall be a father to the
inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the House of
Judah. I place the key of the House of David
on his shoulder; should he open, no one shall
close, should he close, no one shall open.
I drive him like a peg into a firm place; he
will become a throne of glory for his father's
house.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 137

Response:

Your love, O Lord, is eternal,
discard not the work of your hands.

1. I thank you, Lord, with all my heart,
you have heard the words of my mouth.
Before the angels I will bless you.
I will adore before your holy temple. (R.)
2. I thank you for your faithfulness and love
which excel all we ever knew of you.
On the day I called, you answered;
you increased the strength of my soul. (R.)
3. The Lord is high yet he looks on the lowly
and the haughty he knows from afar.
Your love, O Lord, is eternal,
discard not the work of your hands. (R.)

SECOND READING

Roman 11:33-36

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the
Romans.

How rich are the depths of God - how deep
his wisdom and knowledge - and how
impossible to penetrate his motives or
understand his methods! Who could ever
know the mind of the Lord? Who could ever
be his counsellor? Who could ever give him
anything or lend him anything? All that exists
comes from him; all is by him and for him. To
him be glory for ever! Amen.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia! God in Christ was
reconciling the world to himself,
and he has entrusted to us the news that
they are reconciled. Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Matthew 16:13-20

A reading from the holy Gospel according to
Matthew.

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea
Philippi he put this question to his disciples,
'Who do people say the Son of Man is?' And
they said, 'Some say he is John the Baptist,
some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of
the prophets.' 'But you,' he said, 'who do you
say I am?' Then Simon Peter spoke up, 'You
are the Christ,' he said, 'the Son of the living
God.' Jesus replied, 'Simon son of Jonah,
you are a happy man! Because it was not
flesh and blood that revealed this to you but
my Father in heaven. So I now say to you:
You are Peter and on this rock I will build my
Church. And the gates of the underworld can
never hold out against it. I will give you the
keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you
bind on earth shall be considered bound in
heaven; whatever you loose on earth shall be
considered loosed in heaven.' Then he gave
the disciples strict orders not to tell anyone
that he was the Christ.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with
the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,

(all bow during the next three lines)

and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the
Virgin Mary,
and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under
Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,
the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored
and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and
apostolic Church.
I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness
of sins
and I look forward to the resurrection of the
dead
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

O Lord, who gained for yourself a people by
adoption
through the one sacrifice offered once for all,
bestow graciously on us, we pray,
the gifts of unity and peace in your Church.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

The earth is replete with the fruits of your
work, O Lord;
you bring forth bread from the earth
and wine to cheer the heart.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Complete within us, O Lord, we pray,
the healing work of your mercy
and graciously perfect and sustain us,
so that in all things we may please you.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

"Having a clear faith, based on the creed
of the church is often labelled today as
fundamentalism. Whereas relativism, which
is letting oneself be tossed and swept along
by every wind of teaching, looks like the only
attitude acceptable to today's standards."

Pope Benedict XVI