

Scripture Study

Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time – Cycle A



Opening prayer

Isaiah 22:19-23

(Ps 138:1-3, 6-8)

Romans 11:33-36

Matthew 16:13-20

Overview of the Gospel:

- This Sunday's Gospel reading takes place in the mostly Gentile city of Caesarea Philippi, which was located about 20 miles north of the Sea of Galilee. Originally named Paneas, after the pagan god of shepherds, Pan, it featured a popular shrine to him carved into an immense rock cliff. Jesus chose this backdrop to make an important announcement.
- Jesus precedes his announcement by taking a kind of poll as to who the crowds were saying that he was. He listens to the various theories, mostly likening him to the prophets of old, especially Jeremiah, the suffering prophet, and Elijah, of who it was predicted, would return to announce the coming of Messiah (Malachi 4:5, or, 3:23 in the NAB or NJB).
- All are asked, but only Peter replies. Peter's preeminence among the apostles is often highlighted in the gospels (Matthew 10:2; Luke 22:31-32; John 1:42; 21:15-18). Here Jesus will define that leadership role explicitly (verses 18-19) and as one that that will last as long as the Church exists (verse 18). The first Vatican Council, in defining the dogma of papal primacy and infallibility, specifically references this passage (Vatican I, *Pastor aeternus*).

Questions:

- The 1st Reading describes the appointment of new chief steward, or prime minister, in the royal House of David. Why does it make sense that Jesus' Kingdom would be foreshadowed by (and be the fulfillment of) that of his forerunner, King David?
- In the context of the 2nd Reading, how might you look upon some of the disasters that have befallen Christianity as potential blessings from the Holy Spirit? For example, how might the Holy Spirit use the secularization of modern American culture as a blessing for the Church rather than as a curse?
- Why did people think that Jesus was John the Baptist, Elijah, or Jeremiah?
- What was significant about Peter's confession?
- How does the Church interpret the insight (verse 17), power (verse 18), and authority (verse 19) given to Peter? What are the "keys to the kingdom"? What do they "bind and loose"?
- What Greek word translate the Aramaic word *Kepha* (John 2:41-42)? Why is the change of Peter's name significant, aside from the meaning of the name itself?
- When and how did you come to recognize Jesus as "Messiah, the Son of the living God"?
- In terms of the practical matters of everyday life, how do you answer Jesus' question to Peter for yourself?

Catechism of the Catholic Church: §§ 424, 440—442, 552—553, 881, 1444—1445

Closing prayer

Nothing was conferred on the apostles apart from Peter, but several things were conferred upon Peter apart from the apostles. -Pope Leo XIII, Satis Cognitum

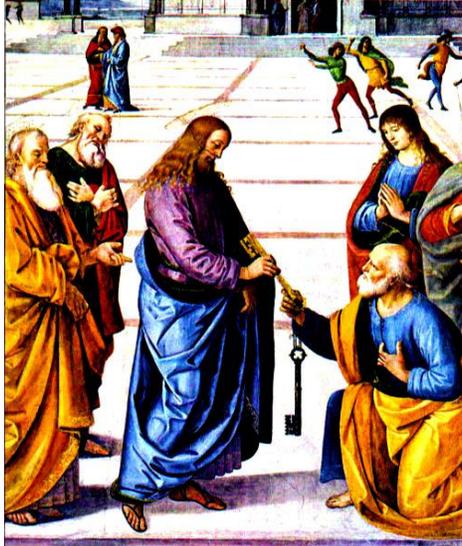
Remember to read and meditate on the daily Mass readings found in the bulletin!

"Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven"

Scripture: *Matthew 16:13-20*

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesare'a Philip'pi, he asked his disciples, "Who do men say that the Son of man is?" And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Eli'jah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ.

Meditation: Who is Jesus for you? At an opportune time Jesus tests his disciples with a crucial question: *Who do men say that I am and who do you*



say that I am? He was widely recognized in Israel as a mighty man of God, even being compared with the greatest of the prophets, John the Baptist, Elijah, and Jeremiah. Peter, always quick to respond, exclaimed that he was *the Christ, the Son of the living God*. No mortal being could have revealed this to Peter; but only God. Jesus then confers on Peter authority to govern the church that Jesus would build, a church that no powers would overcome. Jesus plays on Peter's name which is the same word for "rock" in both Aramaic and Greek. To call someone a "rock" is one of the greatest of compliments. The ancient rabbis had a saying that

when God saw Abraham, he exclaimed: "I have discovered a rock to found the world upon". Through Abraham God established a nation for himself. Through faith Peter grasped who Jesus truly was. He was the first apostle to recognize Jesus as the *Anointed One (Messiah and Christ)* and the *only begotten Son of God*. The New Testament describes the church as a spiritual house or temple with each member joined together as *living stones* (see 1 Peter 2:5). Faith in Jesus Christ makes us into *rocks* or *spiritual stones*. The Lord Jesus tests each of us personally with the same question: *Who do you say that I am?*

"Lord Jesus, I profess and believe that you are the Christ, the Son of the living God. You are my Lord and my Savior. Make my faith strong like Peter's and give me boldness to speak of you to others that they may come to know you personally as Lord and Savior and grow in the knowledge of your love".

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