

# Scripture Study

Twenty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time—Cycle B



## **Opening prayer**

Isaiah 50:5-9a

(Ps 116:1-6,8-9)

James 2:14-18

**Mark 8:27-35**

## **Overview of the Gospel:**

- Since last Sunday's Gospel reading, Jesus has fed four thousand people with just seven loaves of bread and a few fishes (Mark 8:1-21), and healed a blind man (vv 22-26). He has gone from the Gentile area of the Decapolis (Mark 7:31), to Dalmanutha, on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee, where he is confronted by the Pharisees (Mark 8:10-13), then to Bethsaida, on the north shore of that same sea (Mark 8:22).
- This Sunday's Gospel reading (a longer version of which is found in Mt 16:13-28), finds Jesus and his disciples at the town of Caesarea Philippi, located at the headwaters of the Jordan River. Site of the ancient city of Paneas, it was once home to a temple built to the pagan deity Pan (god of sheep and shepherds), carved into a massive rock wall.
- In Mark's gospel, this passage serves as a key point. It relates Jesus' clear self-revelation of himself as the long awaited Messiah, and his disciple's first recognition of that fact. It also introduces the necessity of Jesus being a *suffering* Messiah, and for his disciples to accept suffering for the sake of his name (Col 1:24, Rom 8:17). When Jesus speaks of his cross (v 34), the graphic image of the crucifixion would hardly need to be explained to his disciples

## **Questions:**

- Thus far, what answers have been given to Jesus' poll (v. 27; see 3:21-22; 4:41; 6:3, 14-15)?
- How and why does the tone of Mark's Gospel change after Peter's declaration?
- What title does Jesus take on, and why (see Daniel 7:13-14)? What four things does he prophesy about the "Son of Man"?
- Why would Jesus rebuke Peter upon seeing his (Jesus') disciples (v. 33)? How might your attitudes toward the ways that God acts affect others?
- In your experience, how can a person who wants to save his life actually lose it? How can a person who loses his life for the sake of Jesus actually save it? What do the verbs "saving" and "losing" mean in these paradoxes?
- Where does Jesus' way conflict with your way? What do you stand to lose by following Jesus? What do you stand to gain?

**Catechism of the Catholic Church: §§ 557, 572, 649, 2544**

## **Closing prayer**

*How hard and painful does this appear! The Lord has required that "whoever will come after him must deny himself." But what He commands is neither hard nor painful when He himself helps us in such a way so that the very thing He requires may be accomplished...For whatever seems hard in what is enjoined, love makes easy. –St. Augustine*

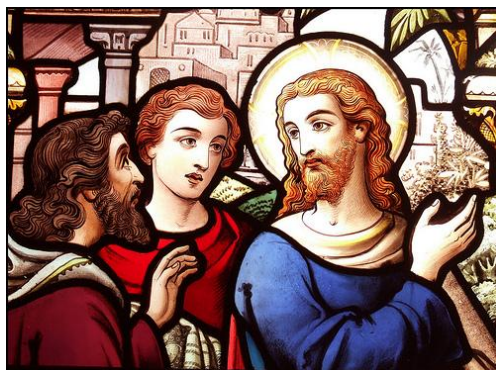
**Remember to read and meditate on the daily Mass readings found in the bulletin!**

# "But who do you say that I am?"

**Scripture:** Mark 8:27-35

27 And Jesus went on with his disciples, to the villages of Caesare'a Philip'pi; and on the way he asked his disciples, "Who do men say that I am?" 28 And they told him, "John the Baptist; and others say, Eli'jah; and others one of the prophets." 29 And he asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Christ." 30 And he charged them to tell no one about him. 31 And he began to teach them that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. 32 And he said this plainly. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him. 33 But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter, and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are not on the side of God, but of men." 34 And he called to him the multitude with his disciples, and said to them, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. 35 For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it.

**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, professes that Jesus is truly the Christ. No mortal being could have revealed this to Peter; but only God. Through faith Peter grasped who Jesus truly was. He was the first apostle to recognize Jesus as the *Anointed One* (Messiah and Christ). *Christ* is the Greek word for the Hebrew word *Messiah*, which means *Anointed One*. Peter's faith, however was sorely tested when Jesus explained that it was necessary for the Messiah to suffer and die in order that God's work of redemption may be accomplished. How startled the disciples were when they heard these words! How different are God's thoughts and ways from our thoughts and ways! Through humiliation, suffering, and death on the cross Jesus broke the powers of sin and death and won for us our salvation. The Lord Jesus tests each of us personally with the same question: *Who do you say that I am?*

The Lord Jesus explained to all who would listen what it would

personally cost them to follow him as their Lord and Messiah – it would cost them everything, even their very lives! How can anyone make such a demand? God the Father freely gave us his Son, the Lord Jesus, to save us from sin and death – not just physical death but spiritual death as well. When we exchange our life for his we receive far more that we give up. We receive pardon, peace, and the abundant life of God's kingdom now, and the promise of the resurrection and unending life with God in the age to come. When we discover the treasure of God's kingdom – God himself – we gladly give up all that we have in exchange for the life of joy and happiness God offers us. God gives without measure. The joy he offers no sadness or loss can diminish. The cross of Christ leads to victory and freedom from sin and death. What is the cross which Jesus Christ commands me to take up each day? When my will crosses with his will, then his will must be done. Are you ready to lose all for Jesus Christ in order to gain all with Jesus Christ?

"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 and help me to live in the victory of the cross by rejecting sin and by accepting your will."

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