

Your Lourdes Sunday Liturgy at Home

21st Sunday in Ordinary Time

August 23, 2020

“But who do **you** say that I am?”

– Matthew 16:15

If Jesus were bursting onto the scene in our world today, he may have asked his disciples, “How am I trending on Google or Twitter?” or “How do the media and the people label me?” And just like the variety of viewpoints in our day, Jesus’ disciples came up with multiple answers to Jesus’ question of identity. Could Jesus be the second coming of John the Baptist or Elijah or Jeremiah or any of the other prophets of old? Then Jesus bluntly asks his disciples the very pointed question: “But who do **you** say that I am?” And Simon jumps in to answer, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” And everything changes – including his name.

Dominican Liberation theologian and Scripture scholar Gustavo Gutiérrez, O.P. writes: “This question is still valid now: who is Jesus for us today?...Is Christ really the dynamic and demanding center of our lives? Or does our answer about his identity show an anemic affirmation without much impact on our daily lives.” To be “all in” requires a conduct rooted in the decision to follow in Jesus’ footsteps, displaying love for the marginalized and the insignificant people of history and in our service to the neediest.

This story is recounted in three of the Gospels. The basic outline is in Mark 8:27-31 and a slimmed down version is in Luke 9:18-21. Our reading from Matthew 16:13-20 is the most expansive and gives Simon a larger role. It’s in this version where Jesus changes Simon’s name – changes it to Rock (or Peter in English, Petros in Greek or Kepha/Cephas in Jesus’ Hebrew dialect, Armaic). No one ever before then had been called by this name in Scripture. And it’s here where Jesus gives Peter and by extension the other disciples, the Keys to the Kingdom, the authority to loosen the chains of oppression.

Matthew specifies where this episode occurred: in Gentile territory in Caesarea Philippi in the far north of Israel above the Sea

of Galilee. Originally the Greeks (Seleucids) lived in the area. They called it *Paneas* after Pan, the Greek god of music. By the time of Matthew, the area had become a Roman city, and he may have intended the story itself to be read and heard in light of Roman power.

There were caves in Caesarea Philippi called the “Gates of Hades.” The name *Hades* sometimes indicates the underworld, and sometimes it translated to the Hebrew word *Sheol*, an abode of the dead. Jesus used the term here as an image of death and foulness and said that the “Gates of Hades” will not prevail against the new *ekklésia* (gathering or assembly), which we translate as church. There are only two places in the Gospels where the word *ekklésia* (church) is mentioned – both are in Matthew (16:18 and 18:17).

This new *ekklésia* was supposed to be about life, about right relationships and how to overcome what hinders them. The church was to be the center of this ushering in; not simply announcing a future realm, but bringing it about. Jesus was creating here the answer to his own prayer that God’s kingdom will come, that God’s will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

By calling Jesus the Son of God, Peter had desacralized the Roman Empire’s claims about the divinity of Caesar and the validity of his rule. When Jesus gave Peter the “power of the keys,” he was delegitimizing the religious elite who claimed the exclusive right to interpret the Mosaic Law. The disciples had seen Jesus “loose” the laws of Sabbath and purity; now he was sharing that responsibility with them.

In giving Peter and his church the keys to the kingdom of heaven, Jesus gave them the responsibility to open doors as he had done throughout his ministry. While the official religious authorities were often quick to decide who was in and who was out, Jesus excluded no one but rather mourned the plight of those who excluded themselves by rejecting the gifts he offered.

“The haunting memory of John the Baptist, the passionate preaching of Jeremiah, and the legendary expectation of Elijah hang

in the air,” notes commentator Sister Verna A. Holyhead as she ponders Jesus’ question, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” It sounds as if all the disciples who were present got in on Round One of the answer session. “Some say John the Baptist.” Word was out that Herod was frightened of Jesus’ mighty works and popularity (Matthew 14:2). Herod thought it was the man he executed who had come back from the dead.

Elijah was another likely suspect, since he had a permanent spot in the collective imagination of the Jewish people. The long-expected Prophet had ridden his flaming Chariot on a whirlwind into the heavens, dropping his cloak on Elisha, his successor (2 Kings 2:11). Henceforth, every family Passover meal set a place just in case Elijah would come to share their Seder.

Meanwhile, Jeremiah disappeared history; legend had it that he had been taken off to Egypt where he was stoned by some exasperated fellow expatriates? Certainly Jesus’ sharp preaching was reminiscent of his fiery Jeremiads. Or maybe he was one of the other prophets. Surprisingly, they all seem to just take it in stride and make no comment about the fact that each attempt to describe Jesus identified him with someone who had already died. Could the public not imagine that God might send a fresh prophet into their moment of history?

Having heard what the religious rumor mill was turning out, Jesus turned the spotlight on his friends. Peter took the role of spokesman and proclaimed, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” What we can assume is that even if Peter might not have had the most orthodox theological or dogmatic propositions in mind, his words connoted a commitment. Speaking for the group, he declared that they believed God was speaking through Jesus in quite an extraordinary way. In fact, they were betting their lives on it. For them, Jesus was the Christ, God’s anointed, the one who was speaking God’s will and word in that moment.

To the title “Christ,” Peter added “the Son of the living God,” a phrase that only occurs in Matthew. That reiterated what the disciples had said on the boat after Jesus came to them and calmed the storm. Then, they said it gratefully in relation to his mastery of

the forces of nature. Now, in a moment of tranquility when they were invited to make a deeper assessment of what they believed, they assented to Peter's proclamation.

Just as Peter spoke for the group, Jesus' reply to him was directed to them all. Jesus pointed out that what they believed about him was not the result of their intelligence or any incontrovertible evidence; it was the fruit of grace. That grace was what made Jesus confident that Peter and the group could be the living stones from which to construct a community that would become his church.

**Your Lourdes Sunday Liturgy at Home –August 16, 2020
20th Sunday in Ordinary Time**

Prelude: Sing along with the Detroit Mass Choir in “Lord, Help Me to Hold Out”: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DvLSeJgMrHo>

Leader: In the name of the Father, † and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.

Assembly: *Amen*

Leader: The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and
the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

All: And with your spirit.

PENITENTIAL ACT

Lord Jesus, you heard Peter profess his faith in and love for you:
Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, you bestowed power upon Peter:
Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you call us to this same faith and love:
Lord, have mercy.

Opening Prayer

Living God, you sent your Son among us to reveal your wisdom and make known your ways. Increase our faith, that we may confess Jesus as your Son, take up his work on earth, and trust his promise to sustain the Church. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God forever and ever. LET THE CHURCH SAY.....AMEN!

**Readings for Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A
August 23 2020**

1st Reading – Isaiah 22:19-23

Thus says the LORD to Shebna, master of the palace:^[L]^[SEP]^[L]19 “I will thrust you from your office and pull you down from your station.

²⁰ On that day I will summon my servant Eliakim, son of Hilkiyah;

²¹ I will clothe him with your robe, and gird him with your sash, and give over to him your authority. He shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah.

²² I will place the key of the House of David on Eliakim’s shoulder; when he opens, no one shall shut when he shuts, no one shall open.

²³ I will fix him like a peg in a sure spot, to be a place of honor for his family.” The Word of the Lord.....Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm – Psalm 138:1-2, 2-3, 6, 8

R. Lord, your love is eternal; do not forsake the work of your hands.

¹ I will give thanks to you, O LORD, with all my heart,^[L]^[SEP]

for you have heard the words of my mouth;^[L]^[SEP]

in the presence of the angels I will sing your praise;^[L]^[SEP]

^{2A} I will worship at your holy temple.

R. Lord, your love is eternal; do not forsake the work of your hands.

^{2B} I will give thanks to your name,^[L]^[SEP]

because of your kindness and your truth;^[L]^[SEP]

³ When I called, you answered me;^[L]^[SEP]

you built up strength within me.^[L]^[SEP]

R. Lord, your love is eternal; do not forsake the work of your hands.

⁶ The LORD is exalted, yet the lowly he sees,^[L]^[SEP]

and the proud he knows from afar.^[L]^[SEP]

⁸ Your kindness, O LORD, endures forever;^[L]^[SEP]^[L]^[SEP]^[L]

do not forsake the work of your hands.^[L]^[SEP]

R. Lord, your love is eternal; do not forsake the work of your hands.

2nd Reading – Romans 11:33-36

33 Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!
How inscrutable are his judgments and how unsearchable his ways!

34 For who has known the mind of the Lord or who has been his
counselor?

35 Or who has given the Lord anything that he may be repaid?

36 For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him
be glory forever. Amen. The Word of the Lord.....Thanks be to God.

Alleluia – Matthew 16:18

R. Alleluia, alleluia.^[L]_[SEP]

18 You are Peter and upon this rock

I will build my Church^[L]_[SEP]
and the gates of the netherworld
shall not prevail against it.^[L]_[SEP]

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel – Matthew 16:13-20

13 Jesus went into the region of Caesarea Philippi
and he asked his disciples, “Who do people say
that the Son of Man is?”

14 They replied, “Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, still others
Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”

15 He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?”

16 Simon Peter said in reply, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living
God.”

17 Jesus said to him in reply, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah.
For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly
Father.

18 And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build
my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against
it.¹⁹ I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you
bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on
earth shall be loosed in heaven.”²⁰ Then he strictly ordered his
disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ.

The Gospel of the Lord...Praise to you lord Jesus Christ.

Reflection Prompts:

Before you begin, sing along as the Walter Hawkins Love Center Choir shares “Dear Jesus.”

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L_Q9mV5CrMA

This Sunday’s selection from Paul’s letter to the Romans is a poetic hymn/prayer that sings of “the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God” and then asks “who has known the mind of the Lord or who has been his counselor?” That’s very reminiscent of God’s cascade of questions for Job in Chapters 38 and 39 that demonstrate the vastness of God’s creative presence.

- Have you had an expansive experience of God in nature, by the sea, on a mountaintop, in the woods, at a zoo, or in a nursery where a baby is discovering the universe? How has that experience “informed” or underpinned your prayer life?

We learn from today’s Gospel that true power and authority rest in loving service to others, not in lording it over others.

- Have you experienced such loving service in your life?
- How are your gifts for mission and service recognized by this faith community?

Jesus asks his disciples who the public thinks and they think he is.

- Who do you say Jesus is for you? How does your concept of Jesus shape your prayer?
- What is Jesus saying to you about your identify as his follower? Who do you say you are? Whose do you say you are?

Mediation Prompt:

Spend three to five minutes meditating on the phrase, “God is love” (the 1st Letter of John 4:8). Or read slowly and savor these lyrics from James Cleveland’s hymn, “God Is”: “God is my protection.... God is my guide and direction.... God is my joy in time of sorrow.... God is my today and tomorrow.....God is my all in all.”

Then move into this week’s intercessions.

GENERAL INTERCESSIONS – August 23, 2020
TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY OF THE CHURCH YEAR

Presider: My friends, let us pray today for all those called to roles of leadership, asking God to grace them with wisdom, humility and the energy to inspire others, that we might together build a better world.

Worship Leader

1. For those called to leadership within the church, that they encourage us to serve the poor and heal our world. We pray: **Hear us, O God.** (ASSEMBLY RESPONDS: **Hear us, O God.**)
2. For those called to leadership in the world: for heads of nations; for those with authority in government, business and the media. For all whose decisions affect others. We pray: **Hear us, O God.**
3. For those called to leadership in education, medicine, and social services; for all those whose work it is to counsel, heal and raise up those who are struggling. We pray: **Hear us, O God.**
4. For those who abuse their authority, wherever and however it is exercised, that they experience a conversion of heart. We pray: **Hear us, O God.**
5. For the people of Mali and Belarus who yearn for fair elections and an end to political corruption. We pray: **Hear us, O God.**
6. For renewed efforts to restore the Earth, its waters and its air as an inheritance for future generations. We pray: **Hear us, O God.**
7. For long-term commitments by individuals and institutions to erase Racism and White Supremacy in American society through an Era of Atonement and Conversion. We pray: **Hear us, O God.**

8. For all who seek healing from substance use disorders and mental health issues, that they find help and mutual support. We pray: **Hear us, O God.**
9. For political, public health and educational leaders to exercise wisdom and prudence in the opening of schools and colleges during this time of resurgence of covid-19. We pray: **Hear us, O God.**
10. For all those who are separated from us by infirmity, especially those listed in our bulletin, and for all those living with HIV and AIDS, that they know our community's care for them. We pray: **Hear us, O God.**
11. For all the dead, that they see God face to face, especially Dan Odom and Cynthia Burden Frazier for whom this Mass is being celebrated. We pray: **Hear us, O God.**
12. Please share any intention you have [PAUSE.....] as well as all our own needs. We pray: **Hear us, O God.**

Presider: Faithful God, send inspired servant leaders to our world to launch efforts for the Common Good for all people. We pray always in Jesus' name. **LET THE CHURCH SAY – AMEN!**

Then sing or recite The Lord's Prayer.

Lean back and sing along with Lionel Richie and the Commodores the signature anthem, "Jesus is Love."

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9KU8tnvk81s>

CLOSING PRAYER

O God, you inspire the hearts of the faithful with a single longing. Grant that your people may love what you command and desire what you promise, so that, amid the uncertain things of this world, our hearts may be fixed where true joys are found. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God forever and ever.

LET THE CHURCH SAY.....AMEN!

Conclude by singing a familiar song: **“Jesus Loves Me.”**

Jesus loves me, this I know
For the Bible tells me so.
Little ones to Him belong.
They are weak, but He is strong.

Yes, Jesus loves me.
Yes, Jesus loves me.
Yes, Jesus loves me.
The Bible tells me so.

Jesus loves me, He who died
Heavens gate to open wide.
He will wash away my sin.
Let His little child come in.

Yes, Jesus loves me.
Yes, Jesus loves me.
Yes, Jesus loves me.
The Bible tells me so.