

Sunday Message

23 AUGUST 2020

21ST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

THE WORD

Year A • Psalter Week 1

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, one 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

Psalms 137

Response:

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

- 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.)
- 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.)
- 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

Romans 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

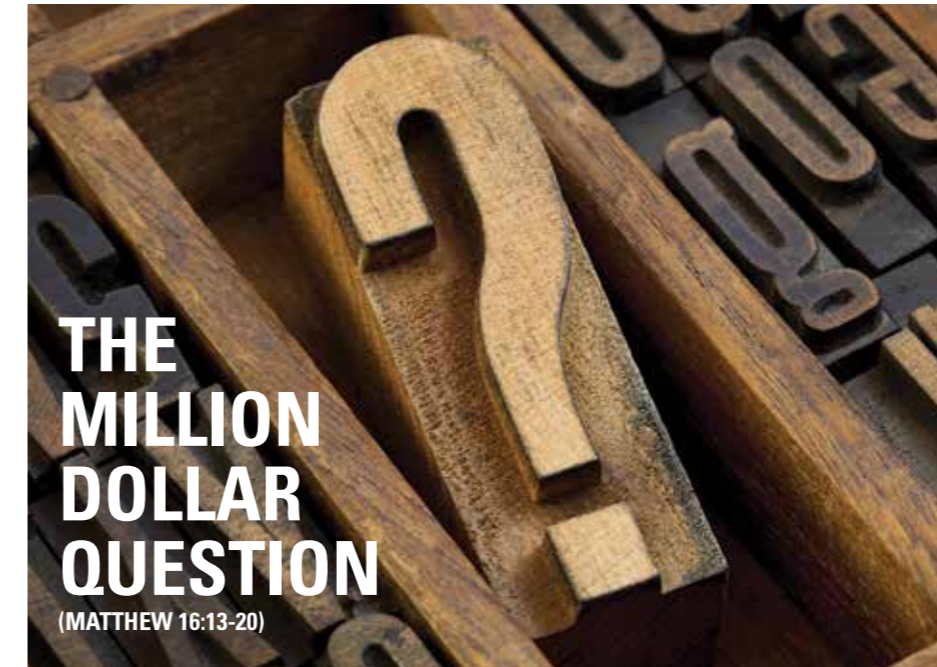
The earth is replete with the fruits of your work, O Lord; you bring forth bread from the earth and wine to cheer the heart.

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



Today's Gospel is one of the most dramatic in Matthew. Jesus has been with his disciples for some time. They have listened to him speak and preach; they have watched him perform great miracles.

Now Jesus wants to see if they have come to realise just who he really is. He asks them, "Who do people say I am?" The disciples give him a variety of answers. "Some think you are John the Baptist, some Elijah, others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." And then comes Jesus' pointed question. "But you," he asks them, "who do you say that I am?"

It is Peter who answers for all of them: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Jesus congratulates Peter on getting the answer right, and tells him that he is going to be the rock upon which the Church will be built.

Jesus' pointed question was not asked just of the disciples that day in Caesarea Philippi two thousand years ago. It has been central for Christians ever since the resurrection. It is asked of us today too: Who do we say Jesus is? Who is Jesus for us? Our answer to that question is absolutely crucial because it will tell us an awful lot about the kind of people we are.

If we acknowledge Jesus as the Christ, if Jesus is for us the way, the truth and the life, then that must shape and form the lives we lead, the values we live by, the decisions we make, the very order of our lives. ■

REFLECT

Jesus asked them the safe question first, the easy question: "Who do others say that I am?" It was safe and easy because to answer it required no commitment and no risk. All it requires to answer a safe question is a bit of curiosity, and some straight reporting.

Asking the easy question was Jesus' way of teeing up the hard question, the one he really wanted to ask, the personal question: "OK, that's what other people

say, but who do you, my closest friends, say that I am?" And Peter got the answer right: "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

Throughout our lives as Catholics we hear a lot about Jesus. We listen to homilies about him every Sunday, we read books about him and leaflets such as this one; we may remember what we were taught about him in school all those years ago. All of this is good, but Jesus' question in

SAY

"Lord, I know you are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

DO

Reflect on your faith and on your relationship with Jesus. Imagine that Jesus is asking you the very same question that he put to his disciples that day in Caesarea Philippi. Who do you say Jesus is?

LEARN

The Christian experience, Pope Francis emphasises, is with the person of Jesus, not a series of philosophical teachings. It is an experience, not an idea; a relationship, not a line of arguments or contention. It is not enough to know who Jesus is; we must have a personal relationship with him.

Jesus chose Peter to be the first Pope. The popes are the successors of St Peter.

Jesus assures us that whatever happens, his Church will go on. The gates of hell shall never prevail against it.

PRAY

Take some time today to pray for Pope Francis. He faces many challenges, including strong opposition from elements in the Church. Ask the Lord to help him in his difficult task. Thank the Lord for him.



today's Gospel goes beyond all that. He doesn't want to know what we have read or heard other people say about him; he's not interested in their views. He wants to know our views, what we individually have to say about him. He is asking each of us to answer that question personally and honestly for ourselves.

That's a risky question because our answer will shape the people we are and how we live. ■