

21st Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A

Today's Gospel is kind of a turning point for the disciples. So, let us try to enter more deeply into this scene of the Gospel that we have just heard.

The apostles have been following Jesus. They have witnessed his miracles, the healing of many people, and the feeding of thousands. But they have also seen people like the Pharisees and Sadducees challenging Jesus and asking him for a sign from heaven.

And now, Jesus asks his disciples to make a decision about him. And he is asking us today to renew our own decision about him.

It is interesting how Jesus goes about it.

First, he asks the apostles, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?"

They give different answers: John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.

Then Jesus makes the question personal:

"But who do you say that I am?"

This is not only a question for Peter and the apostles. It is a question for every one of us:

Who is Jesus for me?

It is easy to know about Jesus. We hear about Him at Mass, we read the Bible, and we know His teachings. But Jesus wants something deeper. He wants us to know Him personally and to have a relationship with Him.

Peter answers:

"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

And Jesus tells Peter that this knowledge did not come simply from himself:

"Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father."

In other words, faith is a gift from God.

We sometimes underestimate the faith we already have. We are here today because we believe in Jesus. We believe that God listens to our prayers. We believe that Jesus is truly present among us, especially in the Eucharist.

But faith needs to be nourished through prayer, the Word of God, the Eucharist, and our life in the Church.

And this brings us to the second important part of today's Gospel.

Jesus says to Peter:

"You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it."

Sometimes people say, "I believe in God, but I don't need the Church. I can pray by myself."

Of course, we can and should pray by ourselves. But Jesus did not intend Christianity to be only a private relationship between God and an individual. He gathered His disciples together, gave them the Eucharist, and sent the apostles to continue His mission.

He gave us the Church.

And the Church has survived for twenty centuries—not because the people in the Church have always been perfect. We know they have not been.

There have been weaknesses, failures, scandals, and mistakes.

But look at Peter himself. Peter was not perfect. He would later deny Jesus three times. Yet Jesus chose him.

This reminds us that God does not wait for perfect people before He works through them.

The Church is a family of sinners who are continually being called to conversion.

And ultimately, the Church does not belong to us.

It belongs to Christ.

Popes come and go. Bishops come and go. Priests come and go. We come and go.

But Christ remains.

This is also what St. Paul reminds us in the second reading:

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

There is so much about God that we simply do not understand. Sometimes we may wonder why God allows certain things to happen, or why the Church goes through difficulties.

But we can trust Him.

Personally, I would not be here as a priest if I did not believe that this is truly the Lord's work. I believe God called me to be a priest and to continue to pass on His message as best I can.

Sometimes I think, “Lord, perhaps You could have chosen somebody else!” Because being a priest is not always easy.

But at the same time, I am very grateful. It is a great privilege to serve the Lord and His people.

And that is true for all of us. We may not understand everything God is doing in our lives or in His Church.

But we can trust Him.

So our responsibility is simple:

Keep Jesus at the center.

Keep coming back to His Word. Keep coming to the Eucharist. Stay close to His Church. And do not be afraid because of all the confusion and chaos around us.

Because the Church is not built on us.

It is built on Christ.

And if we truly believe that Jesus is “the Christ, the Son of the living God,” then our faith must also be seen in the way we live.

We receive Jesus in the Eucharist so that we can bring Jesus to others.

We live the Eucharist when we forgive, when we are patient, when we reach out to someone who is lonely, and when we help someone in need.

So Jesus asks each of us today:

“Who do you say that I am?”

Let our answer be the answer of Peter:

“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

And let us ask God to deepen that faith—not simply so that we may know about Jesus, but so that we may truly know Him, love Him, and follow Him.

And when we leave this church today, let us take one question with us:

If Jesus is truly the Christ, the Son of the living God, how will I show it in the way I live this week?

May Mary, Mother of the Church, help us remain faithful to her Son and keep our eyes fixed on Jesus.

Amen