

**READINGS AND REFLECTION
FOR THE 21ST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME**

<https://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/082320.cfm>

THE FIRST READING IS FROM THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

22:19-23

Thus says the LORD to Shebna, master of the palace:

“I will thrust you from your office
and pull you down from your station.

On that day I will summon my servant Eliakim, son of Hilkiah;
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.

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.

I will fix him like a peg in a sure spot,
to be a place of honour for his family.”



RESPONSORIAL PSALM PSALM 138:1-2, 2-3, 6, 8

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

I will give thanks to you, O LORD, with all my heart,
for you have heard the words of my mouth;
in the presence of the angels I will sing your praise;
I will worship at your holy temple.

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

I will give thanks to your name,
because of your kindness and your truth:
When I called, you answered me;
you built up strength within me.

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

The LORD is exalted, yet the lowly he sees,
and the proud he knows from afar.

Your kindness, O LORD, endures forever;
forsake not the work of your hands.

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

THE SECOND READING IS FROM ST PAUL'S LETTER TO THE ROMANS 11:33-36

Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!
How inscrutable are his judgments and how unsearchable his ways!
*For who has known the mind of the Lord
or who has been his counsellor?
Or who has given the Lord anything that he may be repaid?*
For from him and through him and for him are all things.
To him be glory forever. Amen.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

You are Peter and upon this rock I will build my Church
and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it. Mt 16:28

A READING FROM THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW 16:13-20

Jesus went into the region of Caesarea Philippi and asked his disciples,
“Who do people say that the Son of Man is?”
They replied, “Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah,
still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”
He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?”

**Who do you
say I am?**



Simon Peter said in reply,
“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”
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.
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.
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.”
Then he strictly ordered his disciples
to tell no one that he was the Christ.

REFLECTION

Jesus asks two questions in today's Gospel which reveal much about who Jesus is and which ask us who or what constitutes the centre of our lives. Jesus asks, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" and "Who do you say that I am?"

In the first question, Jesus is asking the disciples what they hear about him. Is Jesus known somewhat for whom he really is or are people influenced by misperceptions, propaganda or confusion?

When Jesus asks "Who do you say that I am?", we might think of Peter's answer ("You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."). However the Gospel is not just about giving the right answer from out of our heads. It is also about what is in our hearts – how we respond to the mystery of God in Christ and to others in what we do and say in the nitty-gritty of our lives. We have a treasure to draw upon for our vision, our belonging, for forgiveness, courage, wisdom, generosity, kindness, resistance to evil and hope.

People who live authentically out of the anchor point of their lives often inspire us. Their self-giving to their spouses, children, friends or others shapes how they live, but importantly also they have an impact on us through being the people they have become. Some others – through their creativity, learning, their pursuit of justice or their service to others - can make our world a better place. Surely for most people, profound grief and loss reshapes or may weaken our approach to life. Anger or fear can sap goodness out of our lives daily. In fact, what really becomes the centre of our world may not be the lofty aspirations with which we begin our young adult lives but what our response will be when our experiences and circumstances of life knock us off kilter. We have to struggle to regain our centre. Christ as our centre does not mean there will not be difficulties, pain or losses.



In Jerusalem, the Dome of the Rock is now a Muslim shrine. However, this site is significant for both Judaism and Islam. According to Muslim tradition, the rock at the centre (underneath the Dome) is the spot where the prophet Mohammed ascended to heaven.

In Jewish tradition, the rock was the centre of the Holy of Holies in the Temple and so their perception of the centrepiece of the world. It is said to have been the rock to which Abraham came to sacrifice his son Isaac.

Some imagery portrayed Israel (for a purpose) as at the centre of the world.

At the centre of Israel is Jerusalem.

At the centre of Jerusalem is the Temple.

At the centre of the Temple is the Holy of Holies.

At the centre of the Holy of holies is the Ark of the Covenant.

What underpins the Ark is the Rock of God's presence and glory.

The imagery in those writings takes the Jewish People deeper and deeper to the centre of the centre of the centre.....

In today's Gospel, Jesus is pushing us to go deeper to our own centre:

“Whom do people say the Son of Man is?”

“Whom do you say that I am?”

In the second question Jesus asks Peter (and us) whom we say Jesus is. Peter was headstrong, doubtful, confused and impulsive, yet Jesus loved him with abandon. We in our humanity are also rich in strengths and vulnerability. Jesus trusted Peter to begin guiding the disciples in every era for our growing and belonging in Christ and in the Body of Christ. Perhaps only someone as *weak* as Peter proved to be at times – and strong in his faith, could have done what he did. As a Church, we also are rich in strengths and vulnerability. However, we as the Church have always been called – and have needed – to review, rediscover, broaden and deepen our ‘glimpse’ and understanding of who God-in-Christ is, and of the Kingdom of God. Again today, Jesus is leading us to listen and to trust God-in-Christ - our Rock - and to ‘change our hearts’ as we respond in faith, hope and love.

Let us live the meaning Peter's answer has for us. Let's pray even when we are too busy to pray. Let's live with hope in the midst of despair. Let's love our neighbour as ourselves. Let's remember the gates of death cannot prevail. Let's live the kingdom values of caring for the poor, feeding the hungry, and defending the oppressed. Let's offer forgiveness despite our anger. Let's love our enemies despite our fear. Let's choose to take up our crosses looking to Christ Risen. Let's practice generosity in a declining economy. Let's begin again even when it feels like we cannot stand up. Let's be confident standing on the Rock which Jesus calls the Church to stand on - before and for the world.

Refer to : www.interruptingthesilence.com/

2011/08/21/re-centering-a-sermon-on-matthew-1613-20-proper-16a/