

AUGUST 27, 2017



TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME



ISAIAH 22:19-23

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

ROMANS 11:33-36

MATTHEW 16:13-20

REFLECTION

A critical question is asked in today's passage from Matthew. Jesus asks his disciples who people say the Son of Man is (this is a title that Jesus uses to refer to himself throughout the Gospel). Their response is an accurate assessment of what was likely the general sentiment amongst the masses. When Jesus adjusts the question and asks them about their perspective, Peter is the first to respond and offers a correct answer. Peter correctly identifies the identity and the mission of Jesus. After this initial exchange, Jesus then offers insight regarding Peter's identity. He identifies Peter as a rock; his mission is the foundation upon which Jesus' Church shall be built (and ultimately Peter does become the leader of the new community that grows after Jesus' Death and Resurrection). Throughout this exchange, Peter hears the interior Word of God and speaks it out loud when questioned about it. As a result, a rock was formed and named by Jesus. After offering insight as to what Peter's future will hold, Jesus then commands them all to remain silent regarding his identity as the Christ (the Messiah). Why would Jesus say this? At least a couple of reasons could be given. First, Jesus probably knew that spreading the word about him being the Christ would likely arouse the eye of the authorities who would be a threat to him. Second, Jesus knew that even though Peter correctly identified who he was, the disciples were not yet ready to fully understand what this meant. Such is the reality for anyone coming to discover who Jesus truly is. For people entering the Church today through the Rites of Christian Initiation of Adults, an entire year after their initiation is spent formally unpacking the mystery of what they experienced through the sacraments (this is a period of time known as mystagogy). For them and all of us, we have our entire lives to fully realize what it is that we have received. This is part of the journey of discipleship. Blessed are we to have the opportunity!

ACTION

Meet with a friend from church or a member of your family. Discuss this question that Jesus posed to his disciples: "Who do you say that I am?" Share with each other what this question means to you. If you are artistically inclined, or if you are not and would like a challenge, take some art materials and express how you would identify who Jesus is. Using paper, clay, pencils, paint, crayons, or markers, create images that convey how you would answer the question of who Jesus is.

JOURNALING QUESTIONS

- If Jesus asked you, "Who do you say that I am?" How would you respond?