

Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time

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

“Who do people say that the Son of Man is?”

Peter’s response to Jesus’ question has become the confession of faith of Christians for all time. It is the rock on which Christianity is built - “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

And then comes Jesus’ reply, “Blessed are you Simon son of Jonah. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father”.

What Jesus means is that this powerful declaration by Peter does not come from his human intellect. No natural study or discernment could ever reveal this great truth. It is not within Peter’s power as a human being to comprehend this. It is God the Father who has laid this upon the heart of Peter by a special grace.

With our merely human judgment, Peter was a very unlikely choice to build Christ’s Church and become the first Pope. He was a rough and tumble fisherman whose life was centered on his work and making money. Peter frequently showed himself weak and unsure, but Our Lord promised him that he would be the one to strengthen his brethren. God chose HIM for this unique and important vocation.

Sometimes we can really underestimate what God can do in us because we overestimate the limitations of our humanness.

Did you ever catch yourself saying, “Oh, I could never do that!”

Well I think it’s safe to say that we can all admit to that on occasion.

That’s Satan trying to discourage us because he wants us to feel that we are not good enough, that we are weak, inadequate and mediocre. And he certainly doesn’t want us to rely on God!

“Oh, I could never do that...”

Now think about what that is really saying...

For one thing, what we are saying is that the things that we do are up to us. That what we do, what we accomplish, is due solely to own efforts and abilities. But where is God in this?

I will sometimes listen to a homily or talk from one of the well-known Catholic preachers like Bishop Fulton Sheen, or Bishop Barron and immediately think to myself, I will never be able to give a homily with that kind of eloquence and charisma.

Or we might read about the life of one of the great martyr saints like St. Lawrence and think, I wonder if I could ever have that kind of courage and faith.

Now it’s natural to admire gifted and holy men and women.

But sometimes when we do that, we tend to give too much credit to their human intellect, skills and hard work.

And those are good things, but without God's grace and without their cooperation with God's plans for them, they would be nothing.

Did God not tell us all throughout scripture that all things are possible with his help. And in fact, he says that we CAN DO NOTHING without him. In John's Gospel Jesus says, "Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing." (Jn 15:5)

Don't confuse someone else's gifts with yours. Don't envy them or compare yourself to them. Each of us is so amazingly unique. Yes, we should appreciate and benefit from another's gifts and contributions, but don't discount your own special gifts. Because your gifts bear fruit too and are no less important in the eyes of God.

God uses Peter as an instrument to build his Kingdom on earth. And Peter cooperated, even as he experienced doubts, misconceptions, confusion, missteps and denials. And in the end, all that Peter is and does comes from Christ.

When you find yourself doubting your abilities or comparing yourself to someone else, stop and take inventory of all of the blessings in your life. Make a deliberate point to ask God for all that he has to give you. He has an unlimited amount to give and he loves it when we ask for more.

It is in those very blessings where God is revealing his gifts and graces. It is there where your uniqueness and specialness are found. That's how God is using you to bear fruit.