

The Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time – Cycle A

August 23, 2020

Christ the Good Shepherd Old Catholic Church

Reflection by Father Charles Blanchard

First Reading: IS 22:19-33

Psalm: 138:1-2,2-3,6,8(8bc)

Second Reading: RM 11:33-36

Gospel: MT 16:13-20

“The Small Church with a Big Heart” walks with each and every one of us where we hear God’s Word and feast at the Eucharistic Table where there is no partiality, celebrating God’s Peace and Love!

On August 20, 2020, no one expected that the most powerful speech at the Democratic Convention would be delivered by a 12 year old boy; of which America had never known.

Thursday evening Mr. Brayden Harrington spoke to the nation. He exemplified **certitude**, **conviction**, and **courage**. Hard enough for anyone, Mr. Brayden Harrington began describing how he met his new-found friend, Mr. Joe Biden, when he was on a campaign stop in New Hampshire. “**He told me we were members of the same club**” Brayden said. “**We stutter**”.

My sisters and brothers, our new-found friend, Brayden, spoke. In spite of life’s challenges, he mustered life’s necessary ingredients; **certitude**, **conviction**, and **courage**, and he spoke. It wasn’t easy. He struggled, wrestled with the simplest of words, and stammered. Though difficult to watch, he didn’t let life’s challenges stop him.

In the end, what the world saw was a young man who exemplified **certitude**, **conviction**, and **courage** over his fear, potential mistakes and doubt. He spoke that which rested on his heart.

August 20, 2020 was a **Memory Moment** that moves people across America’s political spectrum.

- Kelleyanne Conway tweeted after: “**Way to go, Brayden.**”
- Conservative commentator Rod Dreher wrote a column the next day that called him, simply, a hero: “***I had tears in my eyes watching that brave kid struggle to say his words,***” Dreher wrote. “***Tears, because I know from raising a boy who stutters how much courage and grit it took for him to stand before a camera and give that message.***”
- And Dan Rather spoke for a lot of us when described the moment as “***pure, unvarnished courage.***”

Brayden Harrington is a modern profile in **certitude**, **conviction**, and **courage** — showing us very simply and plainly what that means in our own times.

It means the **certitude** to speak, when it would be easier to be silent.

It means the **conviction** to step forward, when it would be easier to stay back.

It’s the **courage** to do what you don’t think you can and do it anyway.

It’s the **courage** of speaking up and speaking out.

And this Sunday, that kind of **certitude**, **conviction**, and **courage** challenges us all, with a Gospel message — and a question — that makes all of us look deeply at **who we are** and **what we believe** and **how we proclaim that to the world.**

One line is most striking in today’s Gospel from Matthew. It isn’t something Jesus does or says.

It’s something he doesn’t say.

When addressing his apostles, and hearing what others are saying about him, he doesn’t ask, “***Who do you think that I am?***”

Jesus asks, instead: “**Who do you say that I am?**”

It’s a question about faith. About living the faith. About witnessing to Jesus Christ.

Jesus is asking his followers: What do you proclaim out loud? What do you show the world?

Peter, of course, knew the answer: “**You are the Christ, the Son of the living God**”.

That stands across history as a great profession of faith — coming just two Sundays after we heard about Peter trying, and failing, to walk on water. “**O you of little faith,**” Jesus said. “**Why did you doubt?**”

From that moment forward, Peter found his faith. He had the **certitude, conviction, and courage** to put it into words.

My sisters and brothers, the question remains: “**What about us?**”

This Sunday, Jesus stands before each of us and asks, “**Who do you say that I am?**” He doesn’t ask us what **we think**, what **we ponder**, or what **we speculate**. He asks us: What do you say?

- What do we proclaim — not just with our words, but with our actions?
- What do we announce to others — by how we live and what we say — about Jesus Christ?
- Do we honor God with the way we live our lives?
- Do we make clear that we are people of faith, hope and charity? That we follow the Christ of compassion and forgiveness, of justice and mercy?
- In a violent and unjust world, what do we say?
- Do we stand up for the victimized, the vulnerable, the weak?

- Do we defend the defenseless? The persecuted, the poor?
- Do we give a voice to the ones who might be too afraid to speak up, the ones who have no one to speak for them?
- Do we have the courage of Peter, the courage to profess our faith with **certitude**, **conviction**, and **courage**?

My sisters and brothers, there are two powerful words about which our new found friend, Brayden Harrington, spoke: “***We stutter.***”

The fact is: in a way, we all do. We all experience life’s challenges. We struggle with limitations, weakness, fears, and frailties.

Like Peter, we can doubt. We can let fear overwhelm us. We can sink when we try to walk.

But that doesn’t have to define us. That doesn’t have to be the end of the story.

The great call of our lives as Christians is the call to live as disciples of Christ in spite of all that. It is a clarion call of **certitude**, **conviction**, and **courage**.

Together, “***We Walk***”

“***Camina Conmigo***”

“***Geh mit mir***”

“***Am Bulabunt Mecum***”

Together, “***We Walk***”

Trust in the Lord today, tomorrow and beyond. Gracias de Dios para todos!

