

Sometimes we wonder about God's wisdom in choosing people, and in today's context, Jesus's choice of Peter as the rock to lead his church.

The gospels do not portray Peter as the brightest of the disciples. In fact, anything but. So is Peter the strong man who will prevail against the enemies to protect the followers of Jesus? Swinging his sword in the garden of Gethsemane was one good example of his being ready for a brawl. Was he the perfect person who was dependable and committed? Well, the story of the shameful denial of Jesus during his trial tells us a different story. Doesn't it? The gospels that tell us that Jesus chose Peter and told him: "On this rock, I will build my church". Did Jesus choose Peter because he is the rock, or is Peter the rock because Jesus chose to build his church on him? A bit confusing, isn't it? The answer is important to us because, in a sense, the church is built upon each one of us. And so we must be like rocks in order to be good Christians. If we are supposed to be rocks, maybe the description demands a commitment.

Having left the seminary, I wandered aimlessly for a long time, convincing myself that I was doing the right thing. Little did I know that the path that I had chosen was scattered with sin and sinfulness. Sin is very attractive.

And I chose to stay there until there was an awakening call deep within me from the Lord.

And I often questioned about this call. It was as though Jesus was attracted to my sinfulness. Despite my sinfulness, I believe that call was real.

When I was feeling a bit adamant about not returning. God became even more adamant.

When I focused on my sinfulness, God focused on what he could do with my sinfulness.

Because I believe that my sinfulness and limitations are not a block in the eyes of God, but rather they became the very reason for God's choosing me. So, even to this day, when I step on the sanctuary to celebrate mass, I still pray: "Lord have mercy on me, a sinner".

When Jesus calls Peter, in today's gospel, he has two questions to the disciples: "Who do people say I am?" And they say: "Well, there are many opinions about you. You are Elijah, John the Baptist, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets." If you notice the content of this question and the answer, it's very interesting to see that this comes from a distant experience. Other people who have heard him, perhaps seen him, or heard of him. The knowledge people had came from the head level. And then Jesus turns to the disciples and says: "Who do you say I am?". And immediately Peter responds with that declaration: "You are the Christ, the son of the living God." And this comes from the heart of Peter, from his heart. Because he knew the Messiah. He lived with him. He encountered him and he experienced his love and forgiveness. Out of that lived experience, Peter was able to declare Jesus as the son of the living, God, the Christ. It came from his heart.

Do you know Christ? Do you know Christ? Does Christ know you? Have you allowed Christ to know you? How much have you allowed Christ to penetrate deep within you? Is your encounter with Jesus real? Are you comfortable knowing that Christ knows you? Are you comfortable knowing that, despite your sinfulness, Christ calls you to be the rock.

I believe this is a good time, because we have time to encounter the Lord and know him deep from within, like Peter, who was able to say: "I know you. I know you, because I have lived with you. I have spent time with you. I know you". How many of us can say: "I know you Christ. I know you are my saviour. You are the son of God. You are the Christ." Jesus asks us today to journey through the road less travelled, through the narrow doors. And sometimes faith can be that narrow door because faith is not

very popular. But to you and me, Christ matters. And if Christ matters, then we can say: "You, Jesus, you have chosen me despite my weaknesses, despite my sinfulness, despite my limitations. You have chosen me through my baptism to build your church on me so that I can be the rock to the world. Called to encounter through our baptism, we now declare Jesus as the son of the living God, the Christ.

That's why the opening prayer today tells us that we can be dependable because God has chosen us to be the rock, despite our weaknesses. Through our personal encounter, we can then say amid the uncertainties of this world, our hearts may be fixed on you, Lord. How eerily relevant today, amid the uncertainties of this world, our hearts may be fixed on that place where true gladness is found.

Do you want to find true gladness? Encounter Christ. Know him and accept him as your Lord and Saviour.