

BREAKING OPEN THE WORD



June 29, 2014 Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul, Apostles Mass during the Day Lectionary: 591

Gospel [mt 16:13-19](#)

When Jesus went into the region of Caesarea Philippi he 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?” 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.”

Spiritual Reflection

“But before doing so, He had to make clear the form of government which would govern it. These forms could be threefold: democratic, aristocratic, and theocratic. The democratic is one in which authority and truth is decided by a vote or an arithmetical majority; the aristocratic is one in which authority is derived from a select few; the theocratic is one in which God Himself supplies and guides the revelation and the truth.

First appealing to the democratic, He asked His Apostles what was the general opinion concerning Him. If there had been a poll or vote taken basing itself on the fallible judgment of men, what would be their answer to this question?

Who do men say that the Son of Man is? – Mathew 16:13

The inability of men to agree among themselves concerning His Divinity was revealed in their answer:

They answered, Some say John the Baptist others Elijah, others Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. -Mathew 16:14

Human opinion can give only conflicting, contrary, and contradictory answers. The four popular opinions show that Our Blessed Lord enjoyed a high reputation among His fellow men, but that none of them had recognized Him for what He was. Herod Antipas fancied that Our Lord was One animated by the spirit of John the Baptist; others thought He was Elijah, because he had been taken up into heaven; and others, Jeremiah, because some believed that Jeremiah was to come as the precursor of the Messiah.

Since no Church could ever be founded on a confusion of this kind, Our Blessed Lord now turned to the aristocratic form of government by asking His chosen ones, His little parliament, His apostolic band, their view:

And you, he asked, who do you say I am? – Mathew 16:15

The appeal here was to all of them who had heard His teaching, had seen His miracles, and had been blessed even with the power of working miracles on others. This higher parliament had no answer—partly because they could not agree among themselves; in five-minutes they would be quarreling. Judas certainly doubted His financial sagacity; Philip doubted His relations with His heavenly Father, and all of them were more or less expecting some secular liberator, who would put an end to the screaming eagles of Rome in their land.

Then, without solicitation or the consent of others, Peter stepped forward and gave the right and final answer:

You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God. – Mathew 16:16

Peter confessed Christ was the true Messiah, commissioned by God to reveal His will to men and fulfilling all prophecies and the Law; He was the Son of God, begotten from all Eternity, but also the Son of Man begotten in time—true God and true man.

Our Blessed Lord revealed to Peter that he did not know this of and by himself; that no natural study or discernment could ever reveal this great truth.

Our Blessed Lord called him first by the name that he had before he was summoned to be an Apostle. Then He called him by the new name He gave him, namely, the Rock, indicating that it was on him, the Rock, that He would found His Church. Peter was addressed by His Lord in the second person singular to indicate that it was not Peter’s confession of Divinity, but Peter himself who would hold primacy in the Church.” – Fulton Sheen

Spiritual Question

1. Do you love the Church as she is or do you desire major changes?
2. If there are things that you desire to change can you accept things as they are?
3. What are your thoughts about the pope?
4. Why did God not use an angel to lead the Church?
5. What made Peter a good pope?