



August 23 2020 // Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time // Lectionary: 121 // Gospel MT 16:13-20

Jesus went into the region of Caesarea Philippi and 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." Then he strictly ordered his disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ.

Spiritual Reflection: A jeweler was visiting a silversmith, whose works she sold in her shop. As he worked on a new piece, he showed her how the silver ore is held in the heat of the refining fire until it is purified.

"How do you know when the ore has been in the fire long enough?" she asked.

"That's easy," replied the silversmith. "When the silver is fully refined, I can see my own image in it. Then I know it has been in the fire long enough." - [From "Out of the ashes" by Margaret Silf, America, May 24, 2010.]

Jesus calls Peter and his followers to become a church that reflects the image of God. In taking on God's work of reconciliation, in our struggle to forgive selflessly and humbly, in our often less-than-successful attempts to imitate the compassion of Jesus, our church and parish reflect the face of God to our world. In the fire of God's Spirit in our midst, in the heat of our own conversion and re-creation in that Spirit, God looks at us and sees his own image reflected back. The ministry of Peter the "rock" belongs to every one of us who has taken on the name of Christ in Baptism: to mirror the very compassion and justice of God in our struggles to realize Jesus' vision of church in our own time and place.

Spiritual Questions

1. Do we let God refine us enough or do we stop when the refining begins to hurt?
2. Do we let Christ's image shine forth in us?
3. Who do people say Jesus is today?
4. How does other people's image of Jesus affect your faith?
5. What can you do to improve God's image in the world today?