

## Homily by Fr. Anthony Davis

**“...But who do you say that I am? ...You are Christ, the Son of the living God...”.**

August 23, 2020

21<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year A)

Is 22:19-23; Rm 11:33-36; Mt 16:13-20

"How do I look?" This has got to be one of the deadliest questions one spouse can ask another. Most of the time a spouse is looking for a compliment. But there are those rare occasions a spouse wants an honest feedback. For this latter reason, in Matthew's gospel today, Jesus asked a simple question to his gathered followers, and later, his disciples, when they were alone: "Who do you say I am?" Simon Peter answered the question for most followers: "You are the Christ, the son of the Living God." In this conversation, Jesus wanted to know how they identified him, and how they (his followers) identified themselves. So answer the question and you will know where you stand with Jesus!

Thus in that answer, Peter defined followers as believers in the Messiah, the Savior. This means, we are the community of the Messiah, those who realize (only if faintly) God's Kingdom. And additionally, we have the power to build up or tear down this Kingdom, depending upon our words and actions.

Although distracted with life things (like this persisting global Pandemic), as I sat down to pray with today's readings, it is upon this basis that I invite you into my journey of reflection, this day.

If someone were to ask us, "Who do you think Jesus really is?" how would we answer? Do we speak and serve in love? Do we reflect the face of Christ to others? First, in Matthew's story, we read how Peter is chosen by Jesus to be the foundation of his church. Jesus doesn't just say to Peter, "I choose you." He chooses him because he has been gifted with revelation. Peter has been given blessings and gifts to be the foundation. So Jesus says: "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this Rock, I will build my church...". Secondly, in Isaiah, Eliakim is being chosen. He is being chosen and gifted to replace Shebna who was exploiting his position for personal gain.

My dear friends, noticing this link, felt like an invitation to ask "How am I chosen? What gifts have I been given and how am I called to use them?" Then reflecting more on Christ's question, "Who do you say that I am?" I realized that this exercise can help me grow in my

understanding of who I am called to be. That is to say, the more I seek to know God more fully, the more I enter into deeper relationship with Him, and the more clearly, I know myself. But the opposite is also true!! The more I dig deep into who I am at my core and find my voice, the more fully I will know who and how God is. In short, this is a “Double-edged” invitation!

So, in summary, if you are still with me, I invite you to reflect deeply and honestly, on the questions: Who do you say I (Jesus) is? Where and how does God choose and gift me this day? God is the provider of inspiration, always present, cheering for me, loving me, using me. Hence, as Ambassadors of Christ, our words and deeds are like mirrors which proclaim to the world who we are helping to build up the local Church, and the whole society. The Lord Jesus offers us the gift of unshakeable faith, enduring hope, and unquenchable love - and the joyful boldness to proclaim him as the one true Savior who brings us the kingdom of God both now and forever. And so he says: “As I have loved you, so you should love one another” (Jn.13:34).

Therefore, if we are the true Church that Jesus set up in today’s Gospel, let’s prove it in our own time and place, not only by paper documents, but also in abounding servant love. Now, who do you say he is to yourself and to your neighbor? How do I reflect Christ to others?