

- “*Who do you say that I am?*”
- Of all the questions that Jesus asks in the Gospels, that is the one which goes to the heart of our personal faith.
- The apostles run through a list: a prophet, Elijah, John the Baptist...being too timid to make that obvious leap, for Jesus had done far more than any of those.
- But Peter has the grace-given insight, the faith and the courage to proclaim: “*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.*” (Mt 16:16).
- ...and yet...even Peter had an incomplete idea of who Jesus is.
- But with Jesus’ death and resurrection, the apostles begin to understand.
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- I often think that doubting Thomas should be the patron saint of our age, for people more and more proclaim as he did: “*Unless I...place my finger in the mark of the nails, and place my hand in his side, I will not believe.*” (Joh 20:25 RSV)
- But...in the Upper Room, as he touched the wounds of Jesus, Thomas proclaims Him most clearly: “*My Lord and my God.*”
- He then knew who Jesus is.

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- Each disciple of Christ must at some time answer that question of Jesus for Himself: “*Who do YOU say that I am?*”...because our belief...our discipleship...is based on that very question.
 - So...what evidence do we have to help us to decide who Jesus is?
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- One of the things that the religions of Judaism and Christianity have above all others is their historicity.
- Most, if not all, other religions are based primarily on the musings of their founders or on claimed mystical revelations—Buddhism, Taoism, and Islam, for instance.
- But Judaism—and Christianity especially—are based on the testimony of many historical witnesses to myriad events and signs that occurred...witnesses who then went on to be persecuted and to

suffer for decades...dying under torture still proclaiming the truth of what they had seen—of the person to whom they pledged themselves.

- And the Gospels and the writings of the New Testament—written not very long after Jesus’ earthly existence—are the historical testimonies of these witnesses.
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- So...is Jesus just a man? If so, He would have had to fool all these hard-bitten, cynical workmen who lived beside Him night and day for three years. That would seem quite impossible.
- And if they knew Jesus was some kind of fraud with whom they were accomplices, one wonders why they would suffer what they suffered for decades...with no foreseeable hope for gain. Very unlikely. Much better to give up the façade, fade into the shadows and live more comfortably.
- And so...was Jesus only a prophet tapping into God’s power with the signs and miracles He did? But He claims divinity for Himself, which a true prophet would not do, proclaiming: “*I and the Father are one*”, and “*He who has seen me has seen the Father*”? (John 14:9 RSV)
- If Jesus were a false prophet, God would certainly not assist.
- Was He, then, perhaps in league with Satan? But Satan has no power to create...bread and fish, for instance, to feed thousands.
- And, as Jesus said, “*...if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided [as would be the case when Jesus exorcised demons], he cannot stand, but is coming to an end.*” (Mar 3:25-26 RSV)
- And the demons—the fallen angels—themselves testify against Him, one of them saying: “*What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God!*” (Mark 1:24 RSV)...and in obedience to Jesus’ word leaves the possessed man.

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- And so...what remains?
 - Perhaps, then, He truly is whom He professes to be...He who, by the testimony of witnesses to the death, exorcised demons, fed thousands, healed the sick, the deaf and the blind...walked on water, raised the dead, rose three days after crucifixion, and ascended before these same witnesses into Heaven.
 - ...He, who fulfilled the prophecies of Isaiah made hundreds of years before.
 - Perhaps, then, He truly IS the Son of God...and, indeed, God Himself.
 - As Sherlock Holmes says: “...*when you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth.*”
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 - And remember that, at the crucifixion, almost ALL abandoned Him. There was no reason to follow Him any longer if He was simply a man. At that point, on an earthly level, He was just yet another naked man nailed to a cross...one of thousands who suffered that fate under the Romans.
 - But then...the Resurrection. The Ascension. Pentecost. The evangelization of thousands, and eventually billions...at the words of who otherwise are just a bunch of fishermen and workmen and a Pharisee, all doomed to martyrdom...and yet all recounting the teaching and the deeds of one of whom they were witnesses...who otherwise just a poor, uneducated, executed carpenter. Does THAT seem likely?
 - And time fails to recount the unexplainable works through God’s intercession over the two millennia—Eucharistic miracles... apparitions accompanied with physical evidence such as at Lourdes and Guadalupe and Fatima...miraculous healings by which saints are canonized even today.
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- Now many of you are challenged in your faith by your friends and co-workers. So ask them: Have you actually analyzed the evidence for our belief, or do you simply dismiss the evidence out of hand because it's not popularly accepted...that it doesn't fit your predetermined template? Is that how you do your research, too? Isn't that what you accuse the Church of doing with Galileo?
- What do you require for belief? Look, and perhaps it is already provided. But like all treasures...like all discoveries, it requires searching; it requires actual effort to find.
- And if you discover that truth that Jesus is God...then does that not necessitate that we believe in His Word...ALL of His Word, given through the authoritative teacher He left us, the Church?
- If the Bible is God's Word as affirmed by Christ, is it for us to selectively omit or edit parts of it? Are we as creatures in the place to judge God the Creator?
- Does a house judge its builder, or rather the opposite? Does an equation judge the mathematician, or rather vice versa?
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- So...who do you say that Jesus is?
- He said to Thomas: "*Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe...*" (Joh 20:27-29 RSV)
- And if a person truly examines the evidence God has given us, there is only one possible conclusion...and that person will proclaim with Thomas, and with billions of others over the last two thousand years: "*My Lord and my God!*"

Reading 1

[Is 50:5-9a](#)

The Lord GOD opens my ear that I may hear;
and I have not rebelled,
have not turned back.

I gave my back to those who beat me,
my cheeks to those who plucked my beard;
my face I did not shield
from buffets and spitting.

The Lord GOD is my help,
therefore I am not disgraced;
I have set my face like flint,
knowing that I shall not be put to shame.

He is near who upholds my right;
if anyone wishes to oppose me,
let us appear together.

Who disputes my right?

Let that man confront me.

See, the Lord GOD is my help;

who will prove me wrong?

Responsorial Psalm

[Ps 116:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 8-9](#)

R. (9) I will walk before the Lord, in the land of the living.

or:

Alleluia.

I love the LORD because he has heard
my voice in supplication,
Because he has inclined his ear to me
the day I called.

R. I will walk before the Lord, in the land of the living.

or:

Alleluia.

The cords of death encompassed me;
the snares of the netherworld seized upon me;
I fell into distress and sorrow,
And I called upon the name of the LORD,
“O LORD, save my life!”

R. I will walk before the Lord, in the land of the living.

or:

Alleluia.

Gracious is the LORD and just;
yes, our God is merciful.
The LORD keeps the little ones;

I was brought low, and he saved me.

R. I will walk before the Lord, in the land of the living.

or:

Alleluia.

For he has freed my soul from death,
my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling.

I shall walk before the Lord
in the land of the living.

R. I will walk before the Lord, in the land of the living.

or: **Alleluia.**

Reading II

[Jas 2:14-18](#)

What good is it, my brothers and sisters,
if someone says he has faith but does not have works?

Can that faith save him?

If a brother or sister has nothing to wear
and has no food for the day,
and one of you says to them,

“Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well, ”

but you do not give them the necessities of the body,
what good is it?

So also faith of itself,

if it does not have works, is dead.

Indeed someone might say,

“You have faith and I have works.”

Demonstrate your faith to me without works,
and I will demonstrate my faith to you from my works.

Gospel [Mk 8:27-35](#)

Jesus and his disciples set out
for the villages of Caesarea Philippi.
Along the way he asked his disciples,
“Who do people say that I am?”

They said in reply,

“John the Baptist, others Elijah,
still others one of the prophets.”

And he asked them,

“But who do you say that I am?”

Peter said to him in reply,

“You are the Christ.”

Then he warned them not to tell anyone about him.

He began to teach them
that the Son of Man must suffer greatly
and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes,
and be killed, and rise after three days.

He spoke this openly.

Then Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

At this he turned around and, looking at his disciples,
rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan.

You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do.”

He summoned the crowd with his disciples and said to them,

**“Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself,
take up his cross, and follow me.**

For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it,

but whoever loses his life for my sake

and that of the gospel will save it.”