

## Reflection for the 21<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time

Today in our Gospel Reading, Jesus asks His closest followers two questions. First, He asks “who to people say that I am?” Then He asks, His disciples “who do you say that I am?” These are great questions to ask. Christ is wondering what impact His message and miracles have had on society in general and if the impact on His closest followers is different than the general public. What He discovers is that the people two thousand years ago, who had heard Jesus and saw the miracles that He preformed know Him to be a man that walks close to God, like a prophet. The average person, two thousand years ago even after hearing Jesus and seeing what He is capable of doing, was not able to come to the conclusion that He is the Messiah, the Son of God.

The disciples, or more accurately Peter has come to a different conclusion of who Jesus is. Peter is able to answer Jesus’ question by stating “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Why is Peter able to state clearly and without a doubt who Jesus is, and the average person of his day is not able to? The answer to this question can be found by looking into the life of Peter.

St. Peter was born in the year 1 AD at Bethsaida, his father was Jonah and his brother was St. Andrew. His given name was Simon, and Jesus in today’s Gospel reading gives him a new name Peter, rock. It was Peter’s brother Andrew who introduced him to Jesus and informed him that Jesus is the Messiah. Peter after meeting Jesus reacts by informing Jesus that he is “a sinful man” and Jesus should leave him. Jesus does not leave Peter, rather He invites Peter to follow Him and to become a “Fisher of Men.” Peter embraces this invitation and along with James and John is one of the closet followers of Jesus. He is there at the transfiguration and he is the first apostle that encounters Jesus after His resurrection. Peter is the disciple that states who Jesus is, and Jesus responds by saying “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”. Clearly, Peter has a special relationship with Jesus, and he has a special calling and commissioning by Christ.

From the Gospel reading today, we can see that Peter was called by Jesus to be the first Pope. We can also see that Peter was a spokesperson for the apostles. But we can look deeper and see something else in the relationship that Jesus has with Peter. It is at the Last Supper that Peter initially refuses to let Jesus wash his feet. When Jesus is arrested the night of the Last Supper it is Peter who cuts off the ear of the High Priest’s Servant. It is also Peter in the courtyard when Jesus is on trial that not once by three times declares he does not know Jesus. Peter clearly is not perfect he is a work in progress, just like all of us. Peter does have some amazing moments of clarity and deep faith, but he also moments of doubt and despair. St. Peter is like all of us, we have our good days and our bad days, but just like Peter we have a loving and forgiving Lord, who sees our potential and who we can be with His guidance and support.