

Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time - Year A

[Isaiah 22:15, 19-23; Romans 11:33-36; Matthew 16:13-20]

Excerpts from Pope Francis - Angelus - 27 August 2023

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Brothers and sisters, the same question that Jesus asks his disciples is a question that **we too** can ask ourselves: “Who do we say that the Son of man is?” (v. 13). What do people say about Jesus? In general, good things. Many see him as a great teacher, as a special person: good, righteous, consistent, courageous... But is this enough to understand who He is, and above all, is it enough for Jesus? It seems not. If **He** were simply a person from the past — just as the people cited in the same Gospel, John the Baptist, Jeremiah, Elijah and the great prophets — **He**, Jesus, would merely be a good memory of a bygone time. And for Jesus, this will not do.

Therefore, immediately afterwards, the Lord asks the disciples the decisive question: “But who do you — **you!** — say that I am?” (v. 15). Who am I for you, now? Jesus does not want to be a key figure from the past; He wants to be an important person **for you today**, of **my today**; not a distant prophet: Jesus wants to be the God who is close to us!

Brothers and sisters, Christ, is not a memory of the past, ... but the God of the **present**. If **He** were merely an historical figure, to imitate Him today would be impossible. We would find ourselves faced with the great gap of time, and above all, faced with his example, which is like a very high, unscalable mountain; we want to climb it, but lack the ability and the necessary means. However, Jesus is alive: let us remember this. Jesus is alive, Jesus lives in the Church. He lives in the world, Jesus accompanies us. Jesus is by our side, He offers us His Word. He offers us His grace, which enlighten and refresh us on the journey. He, an expert and wise guide, is happy to accompany us on the most difficult paths and the steepest slopes.

Brothers and sisters, we are not alone on the path of life, because Christ is with us. Christ helps us to walk, as He did with Peter and the other disciples. It is precisely Peter, in today’s Gospel, who understands this, and by grace recognizes in Jesus “the Christ, the Son of the living God” (v. 16): “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God”, says Peter. He is not just a character from the past, but the Christ, that is, the Messiah, the awaited one; not a deceased hero, but the Son of the living God, made man **and** come to share the joys and the labours of our journey.

Let us not be discouraged if at times the peak of Christian life seems too high and the path too steep. Let us look to Jesus, always; let us look to Jesus who walks beside us, who welcomes our frailties, shares our efforts and rests his firm and gentle arm on our weak shoulders.

With Him close at hand, let us also reach out to one another and renew our trust. With Jesus, what seems impossible on our own is no longer so; with Jesus we can go forth!

Today may we repeat and answer the decisive question: “Who do you say I am” (cf. v. 15). “Who do you — Jesus says to you — who do you say that I am?”. Let us hear the voice of Jesus, who asks us this question. In other words: who is Jesus for me?

An important figure, a point of reference, an unattainable model?

Or is He God the Son, who walks by my side, who can lead me to the peak of holiness, that I cannot reach by myself?

Is Jesus truly alive in my life, does Jesus live with me?

Is He my Lord? Do I entrust myself to Him in moments of difficulty?

Do I cultivate his presence through the Word, through the Sacraments?

Do I let myself be guided by Him, together with my brothers and sisters, in the community?

May this Eucharist, help us to feel Jesus alive and **present** beside us.