

HOMILY Aug 23,2026 Twenty-First Sunday of Ordinary Time

Who Do You Say That I Am? Matthew 16. 13-20

Back in the mid 80's a gospel music group had a popular song about Jesus. In that song they include some of the popular names of Jesus. It gave Him 12 names.

Here is what the song says: REVELATION 21.

He is the Alpha and Omega, The Beginning and the End
The Son of God, the King of Kings
Lord of Lords, He's everything
Messiah, Jehovah, the Prince of Peace is He
The Son of man, Seed of Abraham
Second Person in the Trinity

In the gospel Jesus asks the apostles "Who do YOU say I am?". Simon answered "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God". This marks a pivotal moment where Simon recognizes and proclaims Jesus' divine nature and His role in God's plan of salvation. He is recognized as the long-awaited Messiah, the one who will fulfill God's promise.

Simon's statement challenges us to reflect on our own recognition and understanding of Jesus's identity and his role in our lives. Then, what does it mean that we accept Jesus as the Messiah and our personal Savior?

We shouldn't be surprised by Simon's answer. After all, Simon was Christ's best student. At every moment of teaching; the wedding feast of Cana, the miracle of the loaves and fishes, the curing of the blind man; Simon was in the first row. He did not just hear of these things, but he experienced it himself, he drank the wine at Cana, he ate of the fish that fed the five thousand. He saw the leftover baskets.

He realizes Jesus is not an ordinary prophet like John the Baptist. And Simon also realizes that this revelation that this man from Nazareth is the Son of God was not of his own reasoning. It was revealed to him by God the Father.

In what or in whom will today's followers of Christ put their trust? Will it be in the world in status, wealth, or position? Will it be in an ideology that destroys human dignity? Or will they trust instead in the One whose death and resurrection reveal the love and justice of the living God?

That is what Simon did. And then, Jesus gives Simon a new name and a new mission. He is named "Peter" which means rock. Jesus says "On this rock I will build my Church." This new commitment is seen today when a new Pope chooses a new name. We see it when a child is baptized where the minister asks "What name do you give your child?" It is seen when women take their marriage vows and take their husbands name. It is seen in those who enter religious life and take a new name. Even at our own confirmation we choose a new name as we enter into a new relationship with God.

Peter's declaration of who Jesus is should inspire us to deepen our faith and relationship with Jesus. It should help us look deeper into our own faith journey. In following Peter's example we must be close to Christ to see everything He does so that we can do the same.

Soon Peter will get his marching orders from Jesus. Christ will say "Feed my lambs; Tend my sheep; Feed my sheep". Jesus also says that to us. He says this because He knows that only we can do these tasks. What does that mean and look like for you today? What about the Next month?

This reading should make us ask; "Who do I say Jesus is?" Do you see Him as your King? Are you a soldier of Christ? When our faith is attacked you must stand firm and defend our faith. The sanctity of marriage, one man and one woman for life, is being attacked. Do we defend that position? Do you see Jesus as your Messiah? When you look at Jesus on the cross do you realize that He suffered for you, that He is your Savior?

Is He the one you turn to for strength in life's challenges? And when people in the world ask you, who is Christ, can you say with all your heart, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God? Can you affirm in your heart that Jesus shares the divine nature of the Father? Can you say that Jesus is the shepherd of your life, as King David did in Psalm 23?

Jesus is the foundation of the Church. He is the cornerstone upon which the community of believers is built. He holds the keys to the kingdom. He shares that authority with the Church, with the successor of Peter.

For you and me, we need to see Christ as the anchor of our lives. Everything in our faith is based on this. When the world challenges you with things that try to lure you away, stand firm and be anchored in Christ. Let your faith guide every step you take. Know that He is your shelter that protects you in the storms of the world. Remember all the names that the faithful have given him. Realize that you are united with Him.

Then take that presence into your day-to-day world. Encourage peace and an end to all violence. Promote the dignity of every person and help provide food, clothing and shelter to whoever needs it.

One day Jesus asks you "Who do you say that I am?", I hope you will say "My Lord and my God".