

24th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Theme: "And he (Jesus) asked them, 'But who do you say that I am?'"

After 9am Mass this Sunday, you all are invited to Marist Hall for our Parish Ministry Fair. During this Ministry Fair, you are invited to explore the many diverse ministries/societies that make our Holy Rosary Catholic community, a vibrant and loving faith community. I am always very grateful to the leaders and members of the various ministries/societies we have in our parish and their dedication to God's work. Please know that you will never serve God with a generous and loving heart and not be rewarded abundantly. I pray and hope each and every parishioner will join a Parish's ministry/society. Again, thanks and God's blessings to you all for your dedication in building God's kingdom in our community here in Buckhannon

In today's Gospel, Mark brings us to halfway through his Gospel (8:27-16:8). As you may know, Mark is the first Gospel and the shortest Gospel with only 16 chapters. In this second half/part of his Gospel, Mark proclaims the importance of the suffering, death, and the resurrection of the Son of Man in God's plan.

St Mark tells us when Jesus and his disciples arrive in Caesarea Philippi, Jesus poses two questions regarding his identity. Perhaps, he wants to make sure his disciples know his identity as he prepares them for their future mission. So, the first question Jesus poses to them is: "Who do people say that I am?" His disciples reply that some people say Jesus is "John the Baptist, others Elijah, still others one of the prophets." During the time of Jesus, there was a belief in Israel that prior to the arrival of the Messiah, these great prophets mentioned would come before him. Unfortunately, when Jesus, the Messiah arrived, they did not accept him as the Son of God, the Messiah.

The second question Jesus poses to his disciples is directed to them/disciples: "But who do you say that I am?" Peter, as their spokesman, gets the answer right: "YOU ARE THE CHRIST." In the Gospel of Matthew, Peter's answer was "YOU ARE THE CHRIST, THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD." Matthew tells us it was the Holy Spirit that helped Peter to know this right answer. Peter was the first apostle to publicly declare that Jesus is the Anointed One, Messiah, and the Redeemer of the world. Peter's profession of this faith became the fundamental foundation on which the Catholic church was built. If Jesus asks you this same question that he posed to his disciples, namely, "But who do you say that I am?" what would be your response to him? I do think any of us come up with answers based on our personal experiences of him as your Savior and Redeemer. For me, having an intellectual knowledge of Jesus alone is not enough. It must also be based on both our experiential and intellectual knowledge of him.

Jesus warns them not to disclose his identity to the public. He then goes on to proclaim his passion, death, and the resurrection. Peter, who earlier on professed Jesus as the Messiah, takes Jesus aside and rebukes him. It seems Peter doesn't understand what Jesus' Messiahship entails. He cannot combine the idea of suffering with that of Messiahship--passion, death, and resurrection. He fails to live the faith he professed in Jesus as the Messiah. His action tells us that we all need God's grace not only to profess his Son Jesus Christ as our Messiah and Redeemer but also to be able to live our faith in his Son daily. It is easy to say you have faith especially when all is going well according to your plan. But when things are not going according to your plan, profession of faith in God and his Son becomes a challenge. We soon forget the saying: "NO CROSS, NO CROWN." We must always remember to take up our cross and give up our crown to move from faith in words to faith in action daily. That is what St. James is also calling to us to do in the second reading. Faith without good works is useless, dead. We must put our faith into action. We have a mighty God that we serve. He is good all the time, in season and out of season.

Jesus refers to Peter as Satan and must get behind him. In other words, Peter must not be a hindrance for Jesus' salvific plan that God has sent him to do here on earth. Jesus wants us to remember that as the Master goes, so must go his disciples. Again, for us to be his faithful disciples, we must be willing and ready to carry our cross each day and follow him faithfully. We can't say we love the Jesus of 'Easter Sunday' but not the Jesus of the 'Good Friday.' As St. Catherine of Siena reminds us: "Nothing great ever done without much enduring." If we want to enjoy the glory Jesus has prepared for us in heaven, we must be willing and ready to die each day with him.

Jesus has fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah we heard in the first reading. Isaiah gave us a true description of what Jesus went through as faithful Servant of Yahweh. As a faithful servant: "The Lord God opens my ear that I may hear, and I have not rebelled, have not turned back...." He suffered his passion, death and eventually was raised from the dead because of his firm trust and faith in his heavenly Father. If you want to be a true disciple of Jesus, then you must be ready and willing to go through what he went through: "Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me..."

Let us ask Holy Mother Mary and her beloved husband, St. Joseph, to intercede to their beloved Son Jesus for us as we carry our cross daily to follow him. Amen!