



CELEBRATING AT HOME

21ST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Who do you say I am? (Matthew 16:13-20)



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Sign of the Cross

In the name of the Father, and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

The Lord is here, present among us.

**We are gathered with the whole Church
in this moment of prayer.**

Preparing to hear the Word

We have been called by God
to be the Church,
**the Body of Christ and the Kingdom of God
in this world.**

We are not a building, but a people,
gathered and grounded in
**the Word of God,
the love of Christ,
and the unity of the Holy Spirit.**

Scripture Reading (Matthew 16:13-20)

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi he put this question to the disciples, 'Who do people say the Son of Man is?' And they said, 'Some say he is John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets'. 'But you', he said, 'who do you say I am?' Then Simon Peter spoke up, 'You are the Christ,' he said, 'the Son of the living God.' Jesus replied, 'Simon, son of Jonah, you are a happy man! Because it was not flesh and blood that revealed this to you but my Father in heaven. So I now say to you: You are Peter and on this rock I will build my Church. And the gates of the underworld can never hold out against it. I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven: whatever you bind on earth shall be considered bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth shall be considered loosed in heaven.' Then he gave the disciples strict orders not to tell anyone that he was the Christ.

Reflection - *Who do you say I am?*

At this point in St Matthew's Gospel, Jesus and his chosen ones have travelled and lived together for some time. He now invites them to explore what they

understand about his identity. Even in his question there is explicit hint: Who do people say the *Son of Man* is?

The disciples tell Jesus what they have heard from others: John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.

Jesus then asks the disciples, "But, who do you say I am?" It is Peter who adds to the title 'Son of Man' by recognising Jesus as 'the Christ, the Son of the living God'.

Jesus names Peter as a happy man. This same Peter whose faith faltered when he was buffeted by the wind and waves in the Gospel two weeks ago has now shown his openness to God and recognises Jesus for who he is. But this is not the end of Peter's story. There are ups and downs in his response, as we will see next Sunday when this 'rock' of faith becomes a 'stumbling block' to God's purpose.

In spite of that, Jesus names Peter as the 'rock' on which he will build the church. Peter has a new name and a new vocation. This church will have to battle hostile forces which seek to enslave people in sin. It will be a safe haven of freedom by being the living presence of God.

Peter's job is to use the 'keys of the kingdom' to unlock and release the reign of God's grace into the world. In this work, decisions have to be made for the whole community of the church. Here, Matthew's words about 'binding' and 'loosening' have nothing to do with the forgiveness of sins. They are a kind of pledge that the sincere and honest decisions of faithful people have divine backing. It does not mean that these decisions are the best or most perfect ones. Discernment and decision-making are part of the job of being disciples finding together the way of the Lord; of being the living presence of God in the world.

Finally, Jesus binds the disciples to silence about his true identity lest his Messianism get confused with the people's expectation of a messiah who will free them from Roman occupation.

Like last Sunday, Peter is a lot like us. We really want to believe, to become the presence of God, but

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we don't always seem to be able to do it. We have great moments of faith and moments in which we are deeply in tune with the heart of God. Most of us also have moments when we fall back into narrow and harsh ways that cannot hold the power of God's love. But the Gospel reassures us that, in spite of our weakness and the many ways in which we may be found wanting, God is still close to us and faith is a journey, not a destination.

In my thoughts, words and actions, who do I say Jesus is?

Prayers of Intercession

In spite of our failings,
**you choose us to be a sign of your presence
in our world.**

Help us understand your wisdom
**which unlocks and releases the mystery
of your love in our human journey.**

Continue to create your love in the deepest places of
our hearts and in the actions of our lives
so that new life may come to our world.

Lord's Prayer

Formed by the teaching and example of Jesus,
we pray:

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done on earth
as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.**

Closing Prayer

Ever-loving God,
give your people the joy
of hearing your word in every sound
and of longing for your presence
more than for life itself.
Bring us the peace of your kingdom
which this world does not give.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Blessing

May the grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ,
the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
be with us now and always.
Amen.



Journey into the Light

This resource is presented by the Carmelites for use by individuals, families and small groups as a prayerful celebration of the Word of God to help prepare us to celebrate the Eucharist with our worshipping communities. We are conscious that Christ is present not only in the Blessed Sacrament but also in the Scriptures and in our hearts. We are also conscious of the many people who, for various reasons including sickness and infirmity, cannot physically attend the Eucharist. Even when we are on our own we remain part of the Body of Christ.

In the room you decide to use for this prayer you could have a lighted candle, a crucifix and the Bible. These symbols help keep us mindful of the sacredness of our time of prayer and can help us feel connected with our local worshipping communities.

This text is arranged with parts for a leader and for all to pray, but the leader's parts can be shared among those present.

As you use this prayer know that the Carmelites will be remembering in our prayer all the members of our family.



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