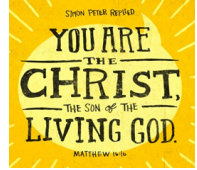


AMDG
21ST SUNDAY
IN ORDINARY TIME
YEAR A
23RD AUGUST 2020



**‘The Lord is high
yet he looks on the lowly’**

OPENING PRAYER

O God, who cause the minds of the faithful
to unite in a single purpose,
grant your people to love what you command
and to desire what you promise,
that, amid the uncertainties of this world,
our hearts may be fixed on that place
where true gladness is found.

Today’s readings give thanks to God who, though from on high, looks to the lowly.

The *Gospel* reveals a God whose choice of the very human Peter shows that the wisdom of God is indeed unfathomable. By reflecting on the way God builds on the faith of this ordinary man, whose name would be similar to ‘Simon Johnson’ in English (‘bar Jonah’), our own faith can be deepened allowing us to proclaim, along with Peter, ‘You are the Christ’!

The prophet Isaiah (*First Reading*) appears to foretell this choosing of Peter. The Lord will entrust a servant with authority, and this servant will become as a father to the nation and as a throne of glory for the kingdom.

The *Psalms* continues this theme of choice: through the Lord’s faithful love for us, we are indeed chosen and our strength increased.

St Paul (*Second Reading*) speaks of love and wisdom, the motives behind God’s choice, the depths of which are impossible to comprehend. And our response to that? Simply to be grateful for that all is freely given and to trust God’s choice of us.

Let’s do that this week, both in our prayer and in our joyful response.

PSALM 137 (138)

R./ Your love, O Lord, is eternal, discard not the work of your hands.

I thank you, Lord, with all my heart,
you have heard the word of my mouth.
Before the angels I will bless you.
I will adore before your holy temple.

I thank you for your faithfulness and love
which excel all we ever knew of you.
On the day I called, you answered;
you increased the strength of my soul.

The Lord is high yet he looks on the lowly
and the haughty he knows from afar.
Your love, O Lord, is eternal,
discard not the work of your hands.

As I come to this time of prayer, I take a few moments to note how I am feeling.
What am I bringing with me today: concerns, worries, fears ...
joys, consolations, peace ...?

I ask for the help of the Holy Spirit that, whatever is happening in my life at the moment, I may begin from a place of real gratitude.

Today's psalm is composed from that place of deep thankfulness.

Surely a response to the workings of the Lord in the life of the psalmist.

God, ever-faithful, hears and answers with a gift of strengthening love.

As I slowly read, and re-read, are there any words which seem to strengthen my own soul? If so, I stay with whatever is moving me.

As I look back on my life, a work-in-progress in the hands of the Lord,
do I feel drawn to praise? What do I find that causes me to bless and adore the Lord in the presence of the angels?

I may wish to end my prayer by simply remaining in the presence of the high and eternal God, who draws close to look upon me and who can sometimes surprise me with a love that is discernible, immediate, tangible.

Glory be ...

GOSPEL MATTHEW 16: 13–20

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi he put this question to his 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 of 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.

In the Gospel today, Jesus is putting some questions to his disciples. During these times, I may be coming to prayer with some questions of my own. I ask the Spirit to give me peace.

I may like to read and pray this Gospel imaginatively. By using my senses to place myself in the scene, I might be better able to encounter the Son of the living God. As I read the text, pondering the interactions between Jesus and the disciples, I note what is going on within me.

Peter is the first to acknowledge openly that Jesus is the promised Messiah. Perhaps I am touched by his honesty, his risk.

I might now imagine Jesus posing the same question to me.

How do I respond? How would I *like* to respond?

I take my time.

I ponder who Jesus is for me ...

then, maybe I consider: who am I for him? Perhaps I can ask him directly.

I wait for his response ...

Do I trust his choice of me; do I know him well enough to trust his promises?

Finally, I might feel drawn to recognise that Jesus is not someone I have to work out, but is one given by the Father. It is through revelation, God’s gift to me, that my happiness comes.

I end with a slow sign of the cross.

Here's a text if you've only got a minute ...

I call on my servant.

First Reading

I thank you for your faithfulness and love, which excel all we ever knew of you.

Psalm

How rich are the depths of God – how deep his wisdom and knowledge.

Second Reading

But you, who do you say I am?

Gospel

This week's texts if you want to explore further:

Isaiah 22: 19–23; Ps. 137 (138); Romans 11: 33–36; Matthew 16: 13–20



How would I like to respond to this question?



ST BEUNO'S OUTREACH
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JESUIT
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