

GOSPEL

Mark 8:27-35

Jesus and his disciples left for the villages round Caesarea Philippi. On the way he put this question to his disciples, ‘Who do people say I am?’ And they told him. ‘John the Baptist,’ they said, ‘others Elijah; others again, one of the prophets.’ ‘But you,’ he asked, ‘who do you say I am?’ Peter spoke up and said to him, ‘You are the Christ.’ And he gave them strict orders not to tell anyone about him.

And he began to teach them that the Son of Man was destined to suffer grievously, to be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and to be put to death, and after three days to rise again; and he said all this quite openly. Then, taking him aside, Peter started to remonstrate with him. But, turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said to him, ‘Get behind me, Satan! Because the way you think is not God’s way but man’s.’

He called the people and his disciples to him and said, ‘If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me. For anyone who wants to save his life will lose it; but anyone who loses his life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it.’

HOMILY OF POPE ST JOHN PAUL II

11 September 1988 (Excerpt)

The Gospel of today’s Liturgy directs our thoughts towards the Apostle Peter who, later in his life, in Rome, was to become the foundation of the faith of the whole Church.

See how Jesus – in the region of Caesarea Philippi – puts a question to his disciples: “Who do people say I am?” (Marc. 8, 27). And then he puts a second: “But you, who do you say I am?” (Ibid. 8, 29). And at that moment Peter answers, speaking in the name of all the Apostles: “You are the Christ” (Ibid). Or as Saint Matthew records it. the answer was: “You are the Christ (the Messiah), the Son of the living God” (Matth. 16, 16).

“Messiah” means the one whom God had anointed with the Holy Spirit and sent to accomplish the work of salvation.

Thus Peter professes his faith. And Christ accepts his profession but then goes on to foretell his own Passion and Resurrection. He declares: “The Son of Man was destined to suffer grievously, to be rejected... and to be put to death, and after three days to rise again” (Marc. 8, 31).

Peter, who has professed that Jesus in the Messiah, is astonished by these words. He takes his Master aside and rebukes him. What does this “rebuke” mean? It means that he tries to convince Jesus that what he has said cannot happen, that such a mission and death cannot happen to him, precisely because he is the Messiah, because he has been sent by God and anointed with the Holy Spirit.

And how does Christ react? He in turn rebukes Peter, in words that are very severe. He says “Get behind me, Satan! Because the way you think is not God’s way but man’s” (Ibid. 8, 33).

Yes, Peter already *believed in Christ*, but he was not yet ready to accept the whole truth about Christ. Like so many of his contemporaries, Peter was thinking of the Messiah in human terms: he saw Jesus as the one who could restore freedom to Israel.

But in fact *the full truth about Christ*, about the Messiah, did soon become known. It became known exactly as Jesus had foretold. And only then did Peter believe: he believed that the Messiah sent by God was the Crucified and Risen Christ.

Peter professed and proclaimed this truth about Christ, beginning on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem right up to the day when for the sake of this truth he gave his life on the Vatican Hill in Rome. And by believing and teaching this, Peter thought and spoke in God’s way and not in man’s.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What stood out to you from the Gospel or Reflection/ Homily?



Head: What do you think the difference is between "believing in Christ" and believing "the full truth of Christ"?



Heart: Do you struggle with the "full truth of Christ"? If so, what aspect?



Hands: How might we try to think and speak in "God's way and not in man's" this week?

PRAYER

Spend some time in prayer with one another:

1. Conscious of what has just been shared, members briefly name/ describe their prayer needs.
2. Intentionally call on the Holy Spirit to be present (for example, "Come Holy Spirit, please be present as we pray")
3. Offer prayers of thanks and praise to God.
4. Pray for each others' prayer needs. Where appropriate, you may like to encourage the group to place a hand on the shoulder of the individual that you are currently praying for.
5. Conclude your prayer time with another prayer of praise, perhaps praying the 'Glory Be'.