

Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish **Bulletin for Teens**

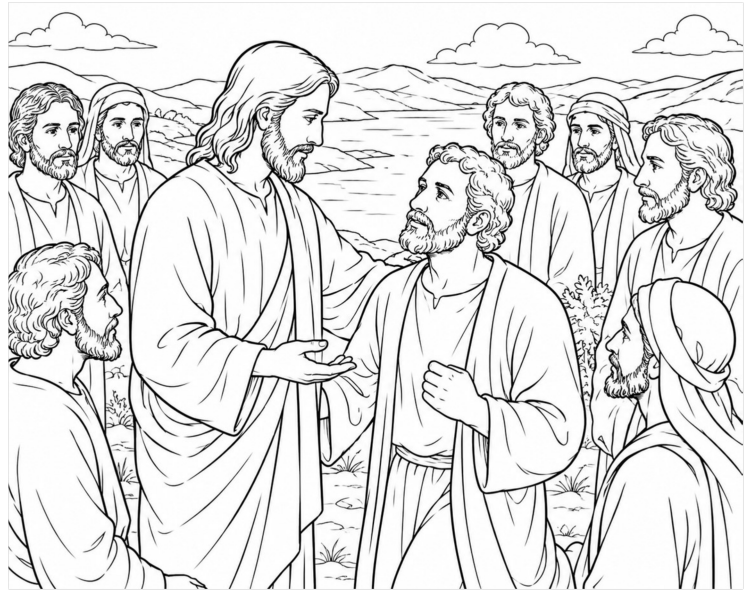
Who do you say I am?



Sunday the 23rd of August 2026, Twenty First Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A

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 is 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 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.



The Gospel of the Lord.

The question

Jesus and His disciples are in a region that is full of temples to other Gods, far away from the familiar territory of Galilee. It is here, surrounded by all these conflicting answers to 'who is God?' that Jesus turns and asks His friends two questions: Jesus first asks "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" This one doesn't take much thought to answer. The disciples quickly reply with the most popular theories: John the Baptist; Elijah; Jeremiah; one of the prophets. Answering the question costs them nothing. They don't have to commit to anything; they're simply reporting on what other people think. Then Jesus asks the hard question: "But who do you say that I am?" This question doesn't have a quick and easy answer. It's personal, it's direct, and they can't hide behind other people's opinions.

Peter's answer

Peter is the one who speaks up. He names Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God. Jesus tells him that God had revealed this to him. It hadn't been something that Peter heard, figured out or read somewhere. It was revealed to him from having a real relationship with Jesus and therefore with God, not from having the right information. The distinction matters. You can know a lot of facts about someone and still not actually know them. You can recite the right answers in religion class and give all the right responses during Mass, but you can still never let Jesus ask you the question personally. Peter's answer works not because he memorised it correctly, but because he was 'present', walking with Jesus, watching Him, following Him, being in relationship with Him.

What is your answer?

You are, right now, probably surrounded by what seems like a hundred different voices trying to tell you who you are; your worth, your looks, your usefulness, your future. Some of those voices aren't even human, instead they are algorithms trying to capture you and keep you scrolling, buying, engaging. It can be genuinely hard to hear your own voice amongst the noise, let alone hear God's.

Jesus doesn't ask you to sort out your every doubt or to have perfect faith before He'll talk with you. He asks the question 'Who do you say I am?' in the middle of ordinary life, the way He asked it on an ordinary walk with tired, confused friends who didn't have it all figured out either. The question isn't a once in a life-time test that you pass or fail. It is a question that He keeps asking, at every stage of your life, because who you say He is will end up shaping who you become.



After Peter answers, Jesus gave him a new name and a new role. He is to be the rock on which the Church is built, and even the power of death will not overcome it. It's a strange kind of reward. Peter, who will go on to deny Jesus three times out of fear, is the one Jesus chooses to build on. That's worth remembering. Jesus doesn't wait for flawless faith. He build something lasting out of honest, imperfect faith that shows up anyway.

For reflection

- If Jesus asked you directly, right now, "who do you say I am?", what would your honest answer be?
- Whose voice do you let define you most often? Is it one you'd want shaping your sense of self?
- Peter's answer came from time actually spent with Jesus. What does your relationship with Jesus look like? Do you make time for just you and Him?
- Where in your life right now do you feel Jesus is leading you, even though you don't feel ready?

A prayer for this week

Jesus, you already know the crowd's answer to who you are. I want to give you mine. [Tell Him who you say His is right now, in this moment, complete with your doubts and your questions]. Help me hear your voice above all the others telling me who I'm supposed to be. Build something real on me, even when I don't feel ready, when I feel unfinished. Amen.

Take heart it is I; do not be afraid!

'As the night was drawing to a close, Jesus came to them [the disciples in a boat] across the choppy waters, and, terrified, they mistook him for a ghost (Mt 14:26). But he said to them, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid!" (v.27). The Lord's presence changes everything: Peter even manages to take a few steps across the waves towards him; but then losing his nerve, he begins to sink, and Jesus saves him. When the Master then steps into the board, the storm subsides, and a profession of faith spontaneously springs out of the disciples' hearts: "Truly, you are the Son of God!" (v.33).

To realise this point, it was not enough for them simply to have witnessed a miracle, nor to have succeeded in the eyes of the people; instead, they had to experience their own weakness and, within it, recognise God's presence. Only this experience could open their eyes and hearts to his closeness, finding peace even in the midst of the storm'

To continue to read what Pope Leo goes on to say, use the QR code or go to [Vatican.va](https://www.vatican.va), Magisterium, Angelus, 2026, Sunday 9 August.

