

21ST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME – YEAR A – 2020

The Scripture readings today, especially the Gospel, show us two important points in our belief. First, Peter is the rock-foundation on which the Church rests. Second, Jesus reassures us that being disciple of Christ means denying oneself, taking up the cross to follow him.

When Jesus asked the disciples: “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” they replied: “Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”

But Jesus wanted to know the disciples’ opinion. He asked them: “How about you? Who do you say that I am?” Peter, inspired by the Holy Spirit, professed with conviction that: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

The question seems very simple, but if Jesus asks you and me today that same question, “Who do you say that I am?” what shall we answer him?

It might be quite easy for us to answer as Peter did: “Lord, you are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Nevertheless, to believe what we profess and to live accordingly to what we believe is not really easy. To profess that “Jesus is the Christ” means to be ready to carry the cross of our daily hardship and follow him.

After the communist of North Vietnam took over the South in 1975, I was among the students who underwent discrimination by the atheist communists. Like every high school student, I had to write an autobiography, reporting to the government about my family’s political and religious background before taking the exam for admitting a university. The communist government unfairly classified the students, and scored their exams based on their family’s backgrounds. Thus, religious background became an obstacle for many students like myself. One of the challenging questions I had to answer was: “What is your religion?” If you were Catholic or any religion, you lost points. Instead of answering “yes, I am Catholic,” I was tempted to answer “no religion” – it means to deny my religion. But God delivered me from that temptation. I courageously answered “yes, I am Catholic.” Confessing of Catholic identity in an atheist Communist country like Vietnam means to accept hardship – the discrimination. It means to carry the cross. As the consequence, I was denied of attending college.

If you are asked to express your Catholic belief in this scandalous world of injustice, prejudice, hatred, violence, and war, can you still stand firm on God’s law, or just turn around for your own safety?

Thanks to God’s revelation, Peter professed his faith in Jesus. Jesus in turn displays his confidence in Peter. Peter becomes what his name means – the Rock. He becomes the solid rock on which the Church, the community of believers, rests.

On this Rock, Jesus will build his Church, “and the power of death shall not prevail against it.” And that is not all, Peter will be given the power to let people enter the kingdom or to keep them out. Jesus entrusted this to Peter, and so to his priests: “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

Jesus entrusted Peter to be the key-keeper, or the heaven-gate keeper, if you will. When people ask why we have to go to a priest for confession, and who gives the priest the power of absolving people from their sins, today’s gospel gives us the theological meaning and the starting point of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. **Your sins are forgiven, not by the priest, but by God through the ministry of the Church entrusted to the ordained priest.** If you pay attention at the Prayer of Absolution by the priest when you go confession, you will know the meaning. The priest prays over you like this: “God, the Father of mercies, by the death and

resurrection of his Son, has reconciled the world to himself, and sent the Holy Spirit among us, for the forgiveness of sins. Through the ministry of the Church, may God give you pardon and peace! And I absolve you from your sins, in the name of the ...”

My brothers and sisters in Christ,

If today, Jesus asks you: “Who do you say that I am,” what shall you answer him? Can you still profess your faith in Jesus Christ – the Son of the Living God?

MASS INTENTIONS

(from Sunday, August 23 to Saturday, August 29)

Sunday	8 a.m.	SC ...	pray for Ryan Dallara (birthday)
	9:15 a.m.	SC ...	for Phaolo Tran Dinh Loc (death anniversary)
Monday	8 a.m.	SC ...	pray for Joyce Massucco (birthday yesterday)
Tuesday	No Mass
Wednesday	8 a.m.	SC ...	pray for the safety of first responders
Thursday	8 a.m.	SC ...	pray for Tran Thi Thanh Van (health)
Friday	8 a.m.	SC ...	for Richard Astin (repose)
Saturday	8 a.m.	SC ...	for special intention of Andruess Family