



Bringing Home the Word

Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)
August 23, 2020

Upon this Rock

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

Saint Peter's Basilica is built on the tomb of Peter, which literally serves as the rock on which the Church is built. Peter states his faith, acknowledging Jesus as the Messiah and the Son of God, in the name of the other apostles. In reply, the Lord reveals his intended mission for Peter: to become the visible foundation of the Church.

This account also tells us that Peter's act of faith did not come through "flesh and blood," that is, through his human abilities, but through a particular revelation from God. By contrast, right afterward, as Jesus foretells his passion, death, and resurrection, Peter "began to rebuke him," denying that this would

ever happen (Matthew 16:22). Jesus scolds him in return.

Peter shows his human weakness and what he is: a stone along the path on which men can stumble. In this scene, the drama of each soul and the history of the papacy and Church itself are anticipated. There is the joint presence of divine assistance, by which the papacy constitutes the Church's foundation throughout history, and human weakness, which is also evident through the centuries and can be transformed only through abandonment to God's action.

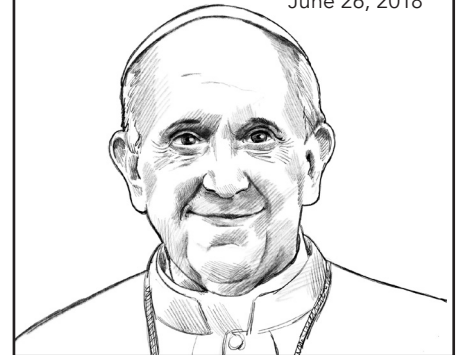
In today's Gospel, Jesus clearly promises the forces of evil will not prevail. Prophets such as Jeremiah (1:18-19) were threatened only by human enemies, whereas Peter will have to be defended from a supernatural evil. Jeremiah receives a promise that affects him as a person and his prophetic ministry; Peter receives assurances concerning the future of the Church and the new community founded by Christ "upon this rock." +

The Lord reveals his intended mission for Peter: to become the visible foundation of the Church.

A Word from Pope Francis

The acceptance of our body as a gift from God is vital for welcoming and accepting the entire world as a gift from the Father...Thinking that we enjoy absolute power over our own bodies turns, often subtly, into thinking that we enjoy an absolute power over creation.

Address to Pontifical Academy for Life,
June 26, 2018



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- How willing are you to let the pope, Peter's successor, confirm your faith today?
- What are you doing to ensure your faith is built on a solid foundation?

Sunday Readings

Isaiah 22:19-23

What he opens, no one will shut, what he shuts, no one will open.

Romans 11:33-36

For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be glory forever.

Matthew 16:13-20

[Jesus said,] "You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it."

Want to Be in that Number?

By Kathleen M. Basi

When I was a child, I had a book about saints that I loved. It was filled with color pictures and heroic, larger-than-life stories. I spent hours trying to decide whether I liked Catherine of Siena or Catherine of Alexandria better. I felt as if I ought to like Siena better for cutting her hair off and being a nun and all, but Alexandria's picture was prettier.

It was years before I realized most of these people weren't the golden-haired northern Europeans portrayed in my book.

It was later still before I realized that by focusing on legends and miracles, I had turned sainthood into something reserved for a select few—something far beyond the reach of an ordinary mortal like me.

These days, I prefer to think of the saints as real people, flawed and fragile, representing every country and culture on earth. Yet for all their diversity, each of them sought exactly what I seek: discernment and courage to walk in the footsteps of Christ in a way that is authentic both to his example and to the time and place in which I live.

Now, my favorite stories speak not of miracles, but of extraordinary courage in ordinary situations—like Elizabeth Ann Seton, who, as an impoverished widow, founded the first parochial school in this country, along with a new order of religious—all while raising her own children.



They speak of deeply practical courage in extraordinary circumstances—like Maximilian Kolbe, who willingly starved to death in place of a fellow concentration-camp prisoner in Auschwitz. In my opinion, that would be even harder than volunteering for a firing squad, where at least the end would come quickly.

And then there are figures with checkered pasts, like Dorothy Day and Thomas Merton—those who don't have feast days in the Church calendar but whose words and actions have reverberated like earthquakes, reshaping the foundation of my faith.

Real people. Real lives. People stumbling through their world in all its messiness, trying to find the path to holiness amid chaos and to identify their

individual purpose for why God placed them on this earth. Those people give me hope. If they managed to find their purpose, maybe I can, too.

It's no longer enough for me to read a paragraph or two about the legendary exploits of those with "Saint" in front of their names. I want to know how the real people behind those legends lived. How they learned to mirror God while surrounded by cranky kids and clueless coworkers and spouses who insist on using dish towels to wipe dirty mouths. Because that is the path I need illuminated. +

***Real people. Real lives.
The saints stumbled through
their world trying to find
holiness amid chaos,
just like we do.***


PRAYER

***Lord, you entrusted the keys
of the kingdom of heaven
to your people. Help me be your
wise and responsible servant.***

—From *Faithful Meditations for Every Day
in Ordinary Time*, Rev. Warren J. Savage and
Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

August 24–29

Monday, St. Bartholomew:
Rv 21:9b–14 / Jn 1:45–51


Tuesday, Weekday:
2 Thes 2:1–3a, 14–17 / Mt 23:23–26

Wednesday, Weekday:
2 Thes 3:6–10, 16–18 / Mt 23:27–32

Thursday, St. Monica:
1 Cor 1:1–9 / Mt 24:42–51

Friday, St. Augustine:
1 Cor 1:17–25 / Mt 25:1–13

Saturday, St. John the Baptist:
1 Cor 1:26–31 / Mk 6:17–29

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