

24TH SUNDAY ORD. (B)

WHO DO YOU SAY I AM?

Who is Jesus? Have you spoken to somebody about Him before? What did you say? What witness can you give about Jesus in your life? We know that He is the Son of Mary, and Joseph is His foster father. The scriptures tell us that He is Emmanuel (God is with us). When He asked His disciples what people said about who He was, they answered that people thought He was John the Baptist, Elijah, or one of the prophets. The people did not know Him but felt He was one of the great prophets because of what He was doing.

When He asked them what they also thought He was, Peter gave the correct answer that He was the Christ. Then He explained that He was the Suffering Servant mentioned in the book of the prophet Isaiah. He is the Messiah who was to come into the world. Like the Suffering Servant, He would undergo suffering but He would not rebel.

Isaiah prophesied that the Messiah would be beaten and maltreated, but His hope was in the Lord God who would help Him, so He would not be disgraced. He trusted in God to rescue Him, thus He said: "The Lord GOD is my help, therefore I am not disgraced; I have set my face like flint, knowing that I shall not be put to shame". He was ready to suffer because He knew something very good would come out of it.

Peter was not happy about what Jesus said concerning His suffering and death. Does it mean Peter did not understand the meaning of 'Christ' that he talked about? Yes; 'Christ' is a title; it means 'The anointed One'. Jesus described Peter as "satan"; was Peter satan? No, but at that moment satan was using Peter to distract the attention of Jesus so that He would not fulfil the promise of the Suffering Servant who has come to save the world. After the temptation of Jesus by satan, Luke reported that "Having exhausted every way of putting Him to the test, the devil left Him, until the opportune moment" (Lk.4:13). So later, the devil was using Peter to tempt Jesus again.

Today, Jesus asks me and you: "Who am I for you?" The terms, Messiah, Son of God, for Jesus mean laying down His life for others, but what do they mean for us? For Peter, Christ was just a name, he did not understand the real meaning. We may profess our faith in Christ, but what we really

believe may be something else. It may be a dead faith as James is talking about in the second reading. It is not faith backed by our actions.

If we know Jesus, then we will have faith in Him and we shall identify ourselves with Him. In so doing, we will put our faith into action by reaching out to others and have the desire to sacrifice for the good of others. If we do not try to follow Him and imitate Him, there is the possibility of becoming stumbling blocks in His way, and in the lives of many people. We may become “satan” for Him and others.

People at this present age do not want to associate themselves with suffering. In fact, we all frown upon suffering, but it is part of our lives, and we cannot avoid it. Accepting suffering in a positive way can lead to positive results; suffering is experienced in every aspect of our lives - in education, the work we do, the profession we hold, where we come from, the home we live, and many more. One of the greatest (if not the greatest) way of experiencing suffering is when one decides to follow Jesus and live according to His commands. You are rejected by the world.

If we know Jesus as the Suffering Servant, and we want to identify ourselves with Him, then we have to embrace all the crosses we encounter in our lives. We should remember that He put His trust in God knowing that He would rescue Him, so we should also have the same trust that God will always come to our help.

What role does Jesus play in your life every day? Are you His follower because you are convinced of who He is and that He is your Lord and Master? How often do you contact Him to direct your life? Do you know Him personally, or intellectually? Do you believe that He is capable of helping you in all circumstances?

We are anxious about many things; frustrated in life; not having peace of mind; worried about what is happening in the home and at work places, in our studies, and in our relationships, because we are yet to know Christ the Redeemer. We are yet to surrender ourselves to Him. We are still in control of our lives leaving Him out. He is asking us today: “Who am I to you? Do you know me as the most faithful companion you can have all the days of your life?” “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come so that you may have life and have it to the full” (Jn.10:10).