

24TH SUNDAY – ORD. TIME (B) (September 11/12, 2021)

WHO IS JESUS FOR ME?

Why did Jesus ask His disciples about what people thought about Him? It is not known, but it may be that He wanted to know and correct the wrong idea people might have had about the coming Messiah. The Jews expected the Messiah to be a warrior who would deliver them from the hand of their oppressors – the Romans. But that was not the job of the promised Messiah.

Jesus' explanation of the nature of the Messiah goes with what the first reading describes. The Messiah would be beaten, spat upon, slapped, and put to shame, but would not rebel or be afraid, because the Lord God would help Him. Nobody would be able to withstand him.

Jesus revealed to them that He is the Messiah, and He would be rejected by the elders and chief priests, and undergo suffering in order to save the world. He told them to tell no one about the fact that He was the Messiah.

The answer that the disciples gave tells us that the people saw Him as a great prophet, because they compared Him with the well-known and great prophets they had experienced – John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah and others. The second question: “But who do you say I am”, is very important for me and for you. Peter answered correctly, but he lacked the actual understanding of what the Messiah actually means; a ‘Suffering Servant’.

I have been a Christian for some years now, so how do I know Jesus? Who is Jesus for me? Do I know Him as Peter knew Him at first, or deeper than that? Do I know Jesus just as a miracle worker, the Son of Mary and Joseph born in Bethlehem? Or I know Him as my personal Savior who is my refuge and stronghold? Do I have a personal relationship with Jesus that affects my faith?

If I know Jesus, not as one of the prophets, but the one who can change my life and bring me salvation, then my way of life will be different, and I will translate my faith into action as St. James is talking about. Then I will live the faith I profess. I will show my faith by my kindness, generosity, humility, patience, perseverance, and forgiveness. The people did not know Jesus as the Messiah, but His words and actions gave them a good idea about who He could be.

I can also ask myself the same question that Jesus asked the disciples; 'who am I as a Christian and a priest'? How do people see me, and what is my true character? Is my true self the same as what people see me on the outside or not? Sometimes I may think that I can hide my true self, but at a point in time it will come out like a cork pushed under water, whether good or bad.

It is not difficult at all to receive baptism, confirmation and other sacraments, but one may find it difficult to live a true Christ-like life. It is easy to say some prayers and attend Mass, but difficult to translate that into action. Like Peter, we want to be with Jesus, but we don't want to undergo suffering. We want an easy and very comfortable Christian life. We don't want to sacrifice our lives for our brothers and sisters. Have we been deceived by Satan? Our Lord makes it clear that the 'cross comes before the crown'. What is the cross in my life, and your life? Who is Jesus for me and for you, and what role does He play in my life and your life?