

# Thursday 18th in Ordinary Time

**Gospel text (Mt 16,13-23): Jesus came to Caesarea Philippi. He asked his disciples, «Who do people say the Son of Man is?». They said, «For some of them you are John the Baptist, for others Elijah or Jeremiah or one of the prophets». Jesus asked them, «But you, who do you say I am?». Peter answered, «You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God». Jesus replied, «It is well for you, Simon Barjona, for it is not flesh or blood that has revealed this to you but my Father in heaven. And now I say to you: You are Peter (or Rock) and on this rock I will build my Church; and never will the powers of death overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven: whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and what you unbind on earth shall be unbound in heaven». Then He ordered his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Christ.**

**From that day Jesus began to make it clear to his disciples that He must go to Jerusalem; He would suffer many things from the Jewish authorities, the chief priests and the teachers of the Law. He would be killed and be raised on the third day. Then Peter took him aside and began to reproach him, «Never, Lord! No, this must never happen to you». But Jesus turned to him and said, «Get behind me, Satan! You would have me stumble. You are their king not as God does, but as people do».**

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***«You are their king not as God does, but as people do»***

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**Today, Jesus proclaims Peter very fortunate for his rightful faith declaration:**

«Peter answered, ‘You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God’. Jesus replied ‘It is well for you, Simon Barjona, for it is not flesh or blood that has revealed this to you but my Father in heaven’» (Mt 16:16-17). By this congratulation Jesus promises Peter the primacy of his Church; but, shortly after, He scolds Peter for having a very human and wrong idea of what the Messiah would do: «Then Peter took him aside and began to reproach him, ‘Never, Lord! No, this must never happen to you’. But Jesus turned to him and said, ‘Get behind me, Satan! You would have me stumble. You are their king not as God does, but as people do’» (Mt 16:22-23).

We have to be grateful to the evangelists for presenting us the first disciples of Jesus as they actually were: no idealized characters, but people of flesh and blood as ourselves, with their defects and virtues; which gets them closer to us and helps us to see that perfecting ourselves in Christian life is a certain path we all have to follow, for nobody is born knowing all the answers.

As we already know how history goes, let us accept Jesus Christ was the suffering Messiah prophet Isaiah announced who offered his life in the Cross. What is more difficult to accept is that we must keep on presenting his work by following the same path of surrendering, renunciation and sacrifice. Imbued, as we appear to be, with a society that encourages quick success, learning without any effort and in a funny way, and achieving the maximum profit with the least possible strain, it should not surprise us we end up by seeing things more as people do than as God does. Once he received the Holy Spirit, Peter learned where the path he had to follow went through and he lived by this expectation. «World tribulations are full of sadness and empty of any prizes; but those we suffer for God are softened by the hope of an eternal prize» (St. Ephraem).