

Thursday of the Sixth Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (Mk 8:27-33): Jesus and his disciples set out for the villages of Caesarea Philippi. Along the way he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that I am?” They said in reply, “John the Baptist, others Elijah, still others one of the prophets.” And he asked them, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter said to him in reply, “You are the Messiah.” Then he warned them not to tell anyone about him.

He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer greatly and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and rise after three days. He spoke this openly. Then Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. At this he turned around and, looking at his disciples, rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan. You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do.”

“Who do people say I am?”

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Today, with the help of Saint Mark's Gospel, we continue listening to God's word. A Gospel with a very clear concern: to discover who this Jesus of Nazareth may be. Through his texts, Mark has been offering us other people's reactions to Jesus: the sick ones, the disciples, the scribes and Pharisees. And today, He is directly asking us: “But who do you say that I am?” (Mk 8:29).

We, Christians, must discover our identity and prove our own faith through being good examples with our life. This duty is an urgent task to transmit a clear and understandable message to our brothers and sisters, who will find in Jesus that

Word of Life bestowing meaning to what they may think, say or do. But, this witness must begin with us being totally conscious of our meeting with Jesus. John Paul II, in his apostolic letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* wrote: "Our witness, however, would be hopelessly inadequate if we ourselves had not first contemplated his face."

Saint Mark, with this text, offers us the right way to contemplate Jesus. First, Jesus asks us who do people say He is; and we can answer, with the disciples: John the Baptist or Elijah, in other words an important, good and attractive person. Certainly, a good answer, but too far away from Jesus' Truth. Then, He goes on asking us: "But who do you say that I am?" It is the question of faith, of our personal implication. And we shall only find the answer in the experience of silence and praying. It is the faith path Peter followed which we should follow also.

Brothers and sisters in Christ let us come to know through prayer the liberating presence of God's love, which is present in our life. He keeps on making alliances with us with clear signs of his presence, as that rainbow appearing through the clouds promised Noah.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

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"Was it necessary for the Son of God to suffer for us? It was, certainly, and for two reasons that are easy to deduce: one, to remedy our sins; the other, to give us an example of how we should act" (Saint Thomas Aquinas)

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"Christians must continuously be instructed, over the centuries, by the Lord, to make them aware that their path is not that of glory and worldly powers, but 'the path of the cross'" (Benedict XVI)

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"It is love 'to the end' (Jn 13:1) that confers on Christ's sacrifice its value as redemption and reparation, as atonement and satisfaction. He knew and loved us all when he offered his life (...). No man, not even the holiest, was ever able to take on himself the sins of all men and offer himself as a sacrifice for all (...)." (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, N° 616)