Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)

Gospel text (*Mt* 16:13-20): Jesus went into the region of Caesarea Philippi and he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter said in reply, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus said to him in reply, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father. And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Then he strictly ordered his disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ.

"Who do people say that the Son of Man is?"

Fr. Joaquim MESEGUER García
(Rubí, Barcelona, Spain)

Today, Peter's profession of faith at Caesarea Phillippi opens the last stage of the public ministry of Jesus and prepares us for the supreme occurrence of His death and resurrection. After the multiplication of breads and fishes, Jesus decides to retire with the apostles for a while to deepen in their formation; in them, the Church, seed of the Kingdom of God sown in us, starts becoming visible.

Two Sundays ago, when we were watching Peter walking on the sea and beginning to sink, we saw Jesus reprimand him: “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?” (Mt 14:31). Today, the scolding is changed to praise: "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah” (Mt 16:17). Lucky of Peter because he has managed to open his heart to the divine revelation and has recognized in Jesus Christ the Son of God, our Savior. Throughout history, the same questions have been asked time and again: "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?... But who do you say that I am?" (Mt 16:13-15). At one time or other, we also have had to explain who is Jesus for me and what do I recognize in Him; through the faith received from testimonies (parents, catechists, priests, teachers, friends...) we have moved into a personalized faith in Jesus Christ, which we also have become testimonies of, because this is what the essential core of Christian vocation consists of.

Only from our faith and communion in Jesus Christ shall we prevail over the power of evil. The Kingdom of

Death is manifested amongst us, it makes us suffer and opens up many question marks; but, at the same time, the Kingdom of God is also made available to us and it unveils the hope; and the Church, sacrament of the Kingdom of God in the world, built on the rock of the faith Peter confessed, allows us to expect the hope and the joy of eternal life. While mankind lives in this world, we shall have to bestow hope, and while it may be necessary to impart hope, the Church's mission will be necessary; this is why. the gates of the Kingdom of Death will never overcome it, as Christ, quite present amidst his people, guaranteed us (cf. Mt 16:18).

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “The blessed Peter, the first of the apostles, the ardent lover of Christ, who was found worthy to hear: ‘And I say to you that you are Peter’, and upon this rock I will build the faith which you have just confessed.” (Saint Augustine)

- “Each of us is a small stone, but in Jesus’ hands participates in the building of the Church: she is a community of life, made up of very many stones, all different, which form a single edifice as a sign of fraternity and communion.” (Francis)

- “Simon Peter holds the first place in the college of the Twelve. Jesus entrusted a unique mission to him (...). Christ, the ‘living Stone’ (I Pt 2:4) thus assures his Church, built on Peter, of victory over the powers of death (....). Peter’s mission will be to keep this faith from every lapse and to strengthen his brothers in it (cf. Lk 22:32).” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, No. 552)