

# Read

Isaiah 22:19-23

138:1-2, 2-3, 6, 8

Romans 11:33-36

Matthew 16:13-20

## Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time

August 27, 2023



### REFLECTION

The Gospel this week starts with a question about identity. Jesus wants to know who people think he is and what they call him. Peter correctly names Jesus as the messiah. Jesus observes that Peter's ability to recognize him as he truly is a gift from God. He then reveals to Peter what God is calling Peter to be, a foundation for the Church by leading it and building up the community of disciples on earth.

As teens you are often asked what you hope to do in the future, what you want to accomplish after high school or after graduating college. But our faith calls us to more than just a job; we believe that each person has a vocation, or a particular calling from God about how to live life in order to build the kingdom of God. This can be done through our jobs, but it is also about the way we live our lives. Some people are called to married life and parenthood while others are called to ordination or life in a religious order.



### ACTION

To best determine what your vocation might be, ask yourself these questions: What are your gifts? What does the world need? What do you believe God wants you to do? This week pay close attention to the skills and gifts you bring to your family, friends and greater community. Ask the people in your life who know you best what they see as your gifts or talents. Take time to pray and listen to what Jesus is calling you to. Figuring out one's vocation takes time, so make these questions and reflections part of your regular prayer routine.



Explore more about  
religious vocations: [https://  
vocationnetwork.org/en/main](https://vocationnetwork.org/en/main)

### ? QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ How do your actions at this time in your life help to build up the kingdom of God?
- ❖ How might you help others realize their vocation?





August 27, 2023

# TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

## LECTIONARY #121A

Isaiah 22:19-23

Psalms 138:1-2, 2-3, 6, 8

Romans 11:33-36

Matthew 16:13-20

## Prepare for the Word

The following elements may be used by the catechist, teacher, or youth minister to prepare to facilitate today's session with teens. You may integrate this information into the reflection and discussion on today's readings.

### Leader's Context

There are two main takeaways from today's Gospel. The first is the question of who Jesus is. Jesus knows he is the Son of God, but he gives the disciples a moment to reflect on his identity. It gives us the opportunity to do the same. After affirming Peter, as Peter was correct in his reply that Jesus is, "the Christ, the Son of the Living God," Jesus then notes that the church will be built on Peter and that whatever happens on earth will be reflected in heaven in some way. This is our second takeaway for reflection: we are called to be witnesses of the kingdom of heaven through our actions on earth.

**Q FOCUS:** *When we know who Jesus is, we are able to live more fully as disciples.*

### Liturgical Calendar Connection

We celebrate St. Monica on August 27. She was the mother of St. Augustine of Hippo (who we celebrate on August 28 and who is a Doctor of the Church). Although she was a Christian, she was married off to a pagan husband who was sometimes violent and unfaithful. Through her prayers and acts of charity, St. Monica's faith became a witness to her husband, who came to believe in Jesus and was baptized later in his life. She also prayed for the conversion of her son, St. Augustine, who led an immoral life for many years. His beliefs led him astray for more than seventeen years and in that time, St. Monica never wavered in her prayer for him to convert to Christianity. She

died in 387, shortly after St. Augustine was baptized into Christianity. St. Monica is the patron saint of alcoholics, mothers, wives, and conversion.

### Church Teaching Connection

"Brothers and sisters, what happened in a unique way in St Peter, also happens in every Christian who develops a sincere faith in Jesus the Christ, the Son of the Living God. Today's Gospel passage also asks each of us, is your faith good? Each one answer[s] in his or her heart. Is my faith good? How does the Lord find our hearts? A heart that is firm as a rock, or a heart like sand, that is doubtful, diffident, disbelieving? . . . If the Lord finds in our heart, I don't say a perfect, but sincere, genuine faith, then He also sees in us living stones with which to build his community" (Pope Francis, Angelus Message, August 24, 2014).

## Hear the Word

Use this resource, a Lectionary, or a Bible to proclaim the reading. The book should be held reverently or placed on a lectern. If possible, light a candle that is placed near where the Gospel will be proclaimed. Gesture for teens to stand.

### Gospel Acclamation

Use the same musical setting that is used in your parish or at school Masses. Teens may help with music and proclaim the Gospel.

Alleluia, alleluia.

### Gospel

Matthew 16:13-20

**Reader:** A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

**All:** Glory to you, O Lord.

All make the sign of the cross on their forehead, lips, and heart.

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.

**Reader:** The Gospel of the Lord.

**All:** Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

*Everyone may be seated.*

## Reflect on the Word

*When beginning the reflection and discussion about today's readings, first refer to the handout for today. Ask teens what they learned about themselves and about Christian discipleship from performing the action for the week and journaling. Ask teens about the readings of the day: What struck them? What do they think the readings mean? How do the readings affect their own lives? Then begin the following reflection:*

We witness a turning point in today's Gospel. Before we reflect on our passage, let's share a little about who Jesus is to you.

► **Who do you say Jesus is? What role does Jesus have in your life? How do you encounter him (in prayer, at Mass, and so on)?**

The disciples were faced with this question in today's Gospel passage. Jesus asks them, "Who do you say that I am?" Jesus knows that their answer will continue to define where they are in their faith and in their spiritual lives. Is he someone they know? Is he someone that just does miracles? Is he just a new prophet? Could he really be the Son of God?

Then we hear Peter's response. Peter is usually the one disciple that is impulsive and gets straight to the point of the conversation. It has been revealed to him by God, the heavenly Father, that Jesus is, in fact, the Son of God and Peter does not hesitate to say so when Jesus asks him.

Jesus affirm Peter's response and tells Peter that because he knows and believes this and was open to the Spirit guiding him to this response, the Church will be built upon him. Wow! What a moment that must have been!

► **What do you think Peter thought about this? What about what the other disciples thought about this statement? How would you react in any of their places?**

Jesus knew that he would not be with the disciples forever and that he wouldn't be present in our world today in the same way that he was during his time on earth. Yet he wanted his ministry of sharing the Good News to continue. When Peter made this statement of faith that was inspired by the Holy Spirit, Jesus acknowledged that faith as the foundation for the Church to come. Knowing that Peter might need more direction, Jesus continues to tell him that whatever he forbids on this earth will also be forbidden in heaven and that whatever he allows on this earth will also be allowed in heaven.

► **Why do you think it is important that what happens on earth mirrors what happens in heaven?**

When we think about what we allow in this life, does it match with what we imagine life is like in heaven? Even though we are not in heaven yet, we, like Peter and the disciples, are called to be Jesus' presence now. We are called to be disciples, to love others unconditionally, to forgive as we desire to be forgiven, and to have mercy on those who may not deserve it in our eyes. Jesus is telling Peter, as he tells us today, that the responsibility to build his church on earth is now part of his, and our, role. We have this responsibility also because we have been baptized into Christ; we take up his ministry of sharing the Good News and ministering to others.

This is the moment where Jesus reveals the particular role of Peter's discipleship. Although Jesus is talking directly to Peter in this moment, remember that the other disciples are still present. They are a very important part of this charge as well. They are witnesses to who Jesus is and the role that they are called to play as disciples. Today, let us consider two questions. The first is, deep in your heart, who is Jesus to you? The second is, do your actions identify you as a disciple?



## Wrapping It Up

Consider these points to conclude the discussion and reflection. Integrate the thoughts and ideas that surfaced during the discussion as well as the "Church Teaching Connection" on page 18.

**Jesus is truly the Son of God.**

**What do I believe about who Jesus is?**

**Do my actions reflect my discipleship?**

## Act on the Word

### Who Do You Say I Am?

For this activity, you will need to prepare a set of index cards with names of famous/recognizable biblical characters, saints, and famous Catholics written on one side of them. You will need enough cards for several rounds of play. You will also need a timer.

Have the teens divide themselves into groups of about four. The whole group will be playing a few rounds of charades. After choosing one person from their team to act out the clues, each team will get one minute to guess as many names as they can. After all the teams have gone, or you have played a couple rounds with all the teams, the team that has the most correct answers wins the game. As you bring

the activity to a close, remind the teens that our actions tell others who we are, what we love, and what we believe. We are responsible, as disciples, to lead others to Christ so we need to continually try to live like him. We know it will not always be easy and it may not always come naturally, but when we have the courage to ask him to help us, we must believe he will give us his grace to do so. This is our call of discipleship and we are in this call together, as the body of Christ.

### Closing Prayer

*Father for ever,  
you revealed to Peter the identity of your Son.  
Grant that we who share in Peter's faith  
may be steadfast and faithful in living the  
faith we profess.*

*Through Christ our Lord.  
Amen.*

### For Next Sunday

To help teens prepare for next Sunday's Mass, print, email, or share on a blog or social media the handout found on the next page. The JPG and PDF files are available at [www.ltp.org/lwgr](http://www.ltp.org/lwgr). Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends.