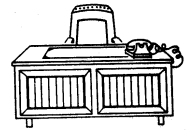


## 24th Sunday in Ordinary Time

September 16, 2018



From the Desk of  
Fr. Romanus

Dear Parishioners,

In this Sunday's gospel, Jesus poses a question to his disciples: "Who do people say that I am?" Jesus clearly understood his identity as the Messiah and often identified himself in relation to God the Father, but it was doubtful the people knew his real identity. The "I am" in this question is reminiscent of God's self-revelation to Moses in the burning bush (Ex. 3:13-14). Could it be that Jesus deliberately included the answer in the question itself? He may have cued the disciples to understand his identity in relation to the Father, as the second person of the Trinity.

The responses indicate that some people thought that Jesus was the reincarnation of John the Baptist, Elijah, or one of the prophets. During their lifetime, these prophets manifested special qualities that led some to mistake them for the Messiah. The tendency to be mistaken for the Messiah prompted John the Baptist to declare unequivocally that he was not the Messiah. He went as far as saying he was unworthy to untie the Messiah's sandals. The irony in play in this passage is that not only were the prophets mistaken for the Messiah, the Messiah was mistaken for the prophets. As well intentioned as the people's responses were, they still missed the mark. Hence, Jesus turned to those closest to him, that is, his disciples and asked, "But who do you say that I am?"

Speaking on behalf of the twelve, Peter responded without hesitation, "You are the Christ." It seemed like the months of training as Jesus' apprentices were beginning to pay off. In Matthew's account of this passage, this was Peter's greatest moment and Jesus did nothing to conceal his delight, showering him with blessings. He assured him that he would be the rock upon which the Church will be built and gave him the keys to the kingdom, to bind and to loose (Matt. 16:18-20). However, in today's gospel from Mark, Jesus has no time to lavish blessings on Peter, but quickly invokes the Messianic secret.

He proceeded to teach them about the paschal mystery, that the Son of Man must suffer greatly, rejected by the leaders, killed and rise after three days. Peter's love and admiration for the master moved him to pull him aside and rebuked him for references to suffering and death. In response, Jesus said to him, "Get behind me, Satan. You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do." Jesus ceases the opportunity to teach about the importance for any would-be disciple to deny himself/herself, take up the cross and follow him.

Whereas Peter's revelation of Jesus' Messianic identity was his greatest moment in Matthew's gospel, it was one of his lowest moments in Mark. Rather than the accolade he enjoyed in Matthew he was scolded in Mark for trying to interfere with the divine plan.

What if Jesus poses the same question to you today as he posed to his disciples, "Who do you say that I am?" What will be your response, and how insightful will it be? We know Jesus to be the Christ, the Messiah. However, the best response to the question will be through actions, that is, the way we identify as Christians. We affirm Jesus' identity when we feed the poor, clothe the naked, volunteer for ministries in the parish, attend Mass, commit our talent, time and treasure to the church and her mission. Moreover, we affirm our faith in the Messiah when we take up our cross and follow him.

Have a great week! Fr. Romanus