

23 August 2020 - Homily - Mt 16:13-20 - Isa 22:15, 19-23

By: Fr. Paul Magyar

Jesus and his disciples journeyed from Tyre and Sidon to the eastern shore of the sea of Galilee. Then to Magdala and Dalmanutha on the western shore of the sea of Galilee. Then they cross the sea again to eastern Bethsaida which is Caesarea Philippi. Jesus is avoiding large cities where he has been previously because the people rejected him there. Jesus mainly came to rest with his disciples to Caesarea Philippi. The city is known for its source of the Jordan river that flows from a cave. King Herod the great, built a temple there in honour of Caesar Augustus and his son Philip. At this point in Jesus' ministry many people have stopped following Him because of the demands of responsibility of the Kingdom. Jesus asks his disciples an abrupt question: "Who do people say that the son of man is?"

The reason for the question is because the Pharisees have a system of teaching stating that the great people of the past are still in existence and they might, during a national crisis, reappear to continue and complete their work. The popular people's belief was that Jesus is John the Baptist continuing Elijah's work. It was also believed that the spirit of Jeremiah passed into Zechariah who hid the ark and tabernacle into Mount Sinai. It was expected that the spirit of Jeremiah would come out from the mountain and guide the people when God would gather his people at the place of concealment. Isaiah was identified as being that and now the people think its Jesus. This shows how little Jesus was actually regarded as the Messiah by the mass of the people. To know that Jesus is messiah needs courage for education/counsel, knowledge, understanding, wisdom, piety, and reaching wonder and awe of recognition.

Peter represents the disciples and early church as well taught and understanding well who Jesus is and why they follow him. Not by blind faith or brain washing. Peter and the early church, which previously had little faith now have grown to a faith that is unshaken and unwavering. Jesus demonstrates, grading Peter and the church, through knowledge by revelation, by calling him by his proper full name: Simon Bar-jona. Then Jesus changes his name to Peter: stumbling block/rock. A name change in the Bible is a significant event. Abram to Abraham, Jacob to Israel. What is the rock? Christ is the rock according to Saint Paul (1 Cor 3:11, 10:4). Jesus is the priest and victim the founder and the foundation of the church. Peter shares in that foundation. Unmovable from effects of Hades (death), not gehena (torment).

Eliakim the son of Hikiah (Isa 22:22) had the key of office in the palace of the king, the key of the gates and of the treasure. The key of the house of David belonged to Christ alone. However now it was delegated to the Apostle Peter as the Lord's representative. This makes Peter the pope, together with the Apostles as priest, teacher, legislator and interpreter. Jesus wanted the disciples to tell no one what he delegated to them because He does not want the multitude to make him a king after their own fashion.