

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON (or a hymn) Turn your ear, O Lord, and answer me; save the servant who trusts in you, my God. Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I cry to you all the day long.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM (Ps 137)

ANTIPHON: Lord, your love is eternal; do not forsake the work of your hands.

RESPONSE: Lord, your love is eternal; do not forsake the work of your hands.

LECTOR: I thank you, Lord, with all my heart, you have heard the words of my mouth. Before the angels I will bless you. I will adore before your holy temple. **R.**

LECTOR: I thank you for your faithfulness and love which excel all we ever knew of you. On the day I called, you answered; you increased the strength of my soul. **R.**

LECTOR: The Lord is high yet he looks on the lowly and the haughty he knows from afar. Your love, O Lord, is eternal, discard not the work of your hands. **R.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION Alleluia, alleluia! You are Peter, the rock on which I will build my Church; the gates of hell will not hold out against it. Alleluia!

COMMUNION ANTIPHON (or a hymn) The earth is replete with the fruits of your work, O Lord; you bring forth bread from the earth and wine to cheer the heart.

Or

Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, says the Lord, and I will raise him up on the last day.

TODAY'S READINGS Isaiah 22:19-23; Romans 11:33-36; Matthew 16:13-20

NEXT WEEK (22nd Sunday of Year A) Jeremiah 20:7-9; Psalm 62; Romans 12:1-2; Matthew 16:21-27

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A community built on rock



27 August 2023 21st Sunday Year A

Jesus takes his closest followers to Caesarea Philippi to have an important conversation. Two key things happen. Firstly, the disciples experience a moment of real insight in their understanding of Jesus. Jesus asks Simon Peter: "But who do you say that I am?" With great trust and a growing faith, Peter replies: "You are the Christ (Messiah), the Son of the living God."

For centuries the Jews longed for the coming of the messiah. By calling Jesus the messiah, Peter proclaims that Jesus is the one for whom they had waited. Jesus is the one who will fulfill the hopes and aspirations of Israel. Jesus is God's anointed one; the one in whom God's Spirit dwells.

Peter watched Jesus embrace people; especially the sick, the poor, the sinners. He witnessed firsthand Jesus loving people into life. He saw the face of God in the face and actions of Jesus. Ultimately, Peter received the gift of God's revelation, which allowed him to understand more clearly who Jesus is, what is Jesus' mission and to recognise the significance of Jesus' special relationship with His Father.

In the verses that follow today's gospel, Jesus challenges the disciples to an even deeper understanding, by instructing them about what kind of Messiah he is and what this will demand of them. Accepting Jesus as messiah means that they must also be ready to accept that He will 'suffer with' people, especially the outcasts; but that God

will ultimately vindicate His beloved Son.

Secondly, Jesus establishes his disciples as a community. In Mt 7:24, Jesus told his disciples to build on rock. It's on the rock (Greek, petra; Aramaic kepha) that is Peter (Greek: petros; Aramaic kepha), that Jesus builds His house; a community of disciples, called the "church".

Peter is not "rock" because of personal qualities of steadfastness or reliability – remember that later on, Peter not only denies Jesus, but deserts him! Rather, Peter is "rock" because of the insight of faith which God has communicated to him. Built on this "rock", the Church will be a community that will survive attempts to destroy it and its members will not be confined to the dead, but rather resurrection awaits them.

The church which Jesus is establishing is for Israel and the Gentile world; for anyone who is willing to listen to His word, live it and believe in Him. Peter is given the keys not to close but to open and as first among the apostles, he has the responsibility to carry on Jesus' mission of preaching and teaching the good news.

As we gather in our own communities of faith, Peter is our model as we continue the mission of Jesus in our time; saying in our own way and our own words, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God."

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