



PARISH OF ST. AGATHA 22ND/23RD AUGUST 2020



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Jesus I Trust in You

POPE SAYS FAITH IN JESUS GIVES FULL MEANING TO CHARITY

Pope Francis says Jesus shows us that the path of perfection lies in trusting in Him and carrying out acts of charitable solidarity. Pope Francis reflected on the day's Gospel (Mt 16:13-20), in which Peter professes his faith in Jesus as the Christ and the Son of God. In the episode, Jesus asks the disciples about His identity, and leads them further in their relationship with Him. "Indeed," said the Pope, "the entirety of Jesus's journey with those who follow Him, especially with the Twelve, is one of educating their faith."

HESITATION IN THE FACE OF MYSTERY

Jesus first asks the disciples who others say that He is. "Speaking of others is not so demanding," said the Pope, "even though in this case the perspective of faith rather than gossip is already required."

Then Jesus asks them: "But what about you?... Who do you say that I am?" This second question, said Pope Francis, touches them to the core. "At this point, we seem to perceive a moment of silence, as each one of those present is called to put themselves on the line, manifesting the reason why they follow Jesus," he said. "Therefore, a certain hesitation is more than legitimate."

ROCK-SOLID RESPONSE

Peter answers for the rest confidently. "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." His "complete and enlightening" answer, said the Pope, is the fruit of "a particular grace of the heavenly Father." And Jesus recognizes Peter's prompt response to grace, praising his faith as the "unshakable 'rock' on which the Son of God wishes to build His Church."

WHO IS CHRIST FOR ME?

Pope Francis went on to remind the faithful that Jesus's question is directed today to each one of us: "And you, who do you say I am?" "It is a question of giving not a theoretical answer," he said, "but one that involves faith, that is, life, because faith is life!" Finding our own answer to Jesus's question, said the Pope, requires us to listen to the Father's voice within us, "and its consonance with what the Church, gathered around Peter, continues to proclaim." "It is a matter of understanding who Christ is for us: if He is the center of our life and the goal of our commitment in the Church and in society." The Holy Father then reflected on the relationship between charity and faith in Jesus. Catholic communities, he said, should provide pastoral care to people who face various forms of poverty and crises. "Charity is always the high road of perfection." But, he added, works of solidarity cannot "divert us from contact with the Lord Jesus." "Christian charity is not simple philanthropy," said the Pope. "On the one hand, it is looking at others through the eyes of Jesus Himself and, on the other, seeing Jesus in the face of the poor."

MARY: OUR FAITH-FULL GUIDE

Pope Francis concluded by imploring the Blessed Virgin Mary's assistance along our Christian journey. "May Mary Most Holy, blessed because she believed, be our guide and model on the path of faith in Christ, and make us aware that trust in Him gives full meaning to our charity and to all our existence." (Summary by Devin Watkins/Vatican News).

THE CROSS IS THE KEY TO UNLOCK THE GATE OF ETERNAL LIFE

Faith comes from God and gifted to us in baptism. In today's Gospel ((Mt 16:13-20) it was Faith that enabled Peter to see who Jesus is, the Christ, the Anointed One, who would defeat the enemy. Jesus' identity was cleverly hidden in His question, *who do you say I AM?* God revealed Himself to Moses (Exodus 3:14) as, *I AM who I AM*. The Jews thought that the *Son of the Living God* was to come and defeat the Romans, who they saw as their enemy. However, Jesus makes it clear that the real enemy is the *underworld*, meaning the devils of darkness led by Satan, who is the enemy of Eternal Life and all humanity. Faith enables us to see and understand this.

SHAPE OF THE CROSS

To enter Eternal Life in Heaven, we need a Key to unlock the Gate. In giving the keys of Heaven to Peter, Jesus is giving him an authority as a caretaker for the Church on earth. The Pope is not to lead by worldly wisdom, sourced from *flesh and blood*, but by Divine Wisdom, sourced from God. In our Baptism and our Confirmation, we too are anointed and given the responsibility and authority to take charge and care of our Faith and be led by Divine Wisdom. We are called and given a set of keys that will someday unlock the Gate of Heaven. The shape of the Key is marked on our foreheads, which is a Cross. It is the mark of Eternal Life.

SHAPE OF THE KEY?

The First Reading today (Isaiah 22:19-23) clearly reveals the shape of the Key when God said, *I place the Key of the House of David on My servant's shoulder*. It was a Cross God placed on the shoulder of Christ and it is a Cross He places on our shoulders. To enter Heaven, we are called to *pick up our Crosses and follow Jesus*, which is the next Gospel reading (Matt 16:24-26) after this one today. Our faith enables us to see that suffering is a divine currency, purchasing our place in Heaven someday. We are called to unite our Sufferings, our Crosses, with that of Jesus' Cross while we live on this earth. The Suffering Holy Souls in Purgatory are guaranteed entry into Heaven, because now they clearly see the importance of uniting their Sufferings, their Crosses with that of Christ, as the Keys to get into Heaven. Just as Simon was called to share in the carrying of the Cross on the Hill of Calvary (5th Station of the Cross), so too are we called to accept the full amount of suffering measured out to us and placed on our shoulders by God in this Valley of Tears.

THY WILL BE DONE ON EARTH

Earthly life is not to fulfil our own desires but God's Desires. Like Jesus, our earthly life is to be spent reversing and untying the knots of disobedience caused by Adam and Eve. We are instruments to be used by God to defeat the Underworld and its evil army of devils. That is why the Legion of Mary is depicted as an Army, because we are called to fight evil in this spiritual battle. It is now our turn to take up the weapon of the Cross and fight the devil by living out acts of Love, Mercy, Humility, Prayer and Obedience to the Will and Word of God. The devils weapon is to conquer us through our disobedience to God's Teachings. Satan's key unlocks Hell. Jesus informs us that the *underworld* will not win in the end, but many will be lost through their sinning. St. Michael the Archangel was appointed by God to defeat the disobedient Lucifer in Heaven.

ROCK OF FAITH. ROCK OF DIVINE SENSE

On earth, God has appointed Our Lady to lead us. In Fatima, she told us that her Immaculate Heart in union with the Sacred Heart would Triumph over the Devil. Love over Hate. That is why she is sometimes depicted with her heel firmly stamped on the devil's (serpent) head. We must act like her heel and never let the devil rise up to get the better of our faith. It is on this Rock of Faith that Jesus continues to build His Church through us. He is relying on us to be faithful. God bless, Fr. Brendan.