

Father Rudy's Reflections

The Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time

August 27, 2023

How Is Your Faith?

My Sisters and Brothers in the Risen Lord,

Some of us have been directed to our faith by attending Catholic schools and Mass, listening and modeling ourselves to our parent's views and ways of living, or perhaps through an agreed conversion to the faith brought about by a marriage or other necessity. In these ways, we might have accepted Catholicism in our lives, and now, conduct ourselves accordingly, but armed only with a vague sense of rote acceptance. Others of us, however, can name the exact moment in time when circumstances or self-reflection suddenly compelled us to realize the light, grace, and mercy of Jesus Christ, inspiring us to become his ardent followers. But in either circumstance, it is paramount for each of us to ultimately answer some powerful, life-affirming questions, such as *who is Jesus Christ and what does he mean to me?*

On this Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time, Matthew's Gospel tells us that Jesus asks a similar question of his apostles in a powerful moment in his ministry, as they gather in the city of Caesarea Philippi, a secular and pagan community, founded by Caesar and King Herod and his son, Phillip. Peter's reply to our Lord's question ("Who do you say I am?") with the words, "You are the Messiah, son of the living God," launches a critical narrative about the future nature and strength of the Church and its community of disciples. Jesus declares his Church will be built upon a "rock" and now refers to his apostle Simon as Peter (Petros), a word closely aligned to this symbolic anchor. Peter clearly understands who Jesus is and what he will mean to the future of mankind; Peter will now play an important role in the founding of the new community of disciples as its first pope.

And for each of us, through our own personal relationship with Christ, must recognize that we, too, are the building blocks of his Church, his stronghold of faith, and we can ultimately impact how it will continue throughout time. Our lives speak loudly and reverberate our commitment to Jesus Christ, who through his life, death, and resurrection over 2,000 years ago, has saved us from ourselves. We must carry forth his legacy to others as his disciples and show the world, in how we live and how we reach out in grace and goodness to others, *there is a way ahead, no matter the challenges we face.*

"Brothers and Sisters, what happened in a unique way in St. Peter, also takes place in every Christian who develops a sincere faith in Jesus Christ. . . Today's Gospel challenges each of us: How is your faith? How is it? What does the Lord find in our hearts: a firm heart, like a rock? Or a heart like sand, that is, doubtful, mistrustful, unbelieving?"—Pope Francis

Yours in Christ,
Father Rudy