

August 24, 2014

Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time

**Introduction to the First Reading:** The readings today focus on St. Peter being chosen as the leader. He was an unlikely leader but God's ways are not our ways. This first reading has a similar theme. The official in the story had a very important and very secure job. But the prophet stated that he would be replaced because he was not doing things God's way. And his replacement, like St. Peter, was a very unlikely candidate. But that's what happened. God's ways are different than ours.

**Reading 1** [Is 22:19-23](#)

Thus says the LORD to Shebna, master of the palace:

“I will thrust you from your office  
and pull you down from your station.  
On that day I will summon my servant  
Eliakim, son of Hilkiah;  
I will clothe him with your robe,  
and gird him with your sash,  
and give over to him your authority.

He shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem,  
and to the house of Judah.

I will place the key of the House of David on Eliakim's shoulder;  
when he opens, no one shall shut  
when he shuts, no one shall open.  
I will fix him like a peg in a sure spot,  
to be a place of honor for his family.”

**Responsorial Psalm** [Ps 138:1-2, 2-3, 6, 8](#)

**R/ (8bc) Lord, your love is eternal; do not forsake the work of your hands.**

I will give thanks to you, O LORD, with all my heart,  
for you have heard the words of my mouth;  
in the presence of the angels I will sing your praise;  
I will worship at your holy temple.

**R/ Lord, your love is eternal; do not forsake the work of your hands.**

I will give thanks to your name,  
because of your kindness and your truth:  
When I called, you answered me;  
you built up strength within me.

**R/ Lord, your love is eternal; do not forsake the work of your hands.**

The LORD is exalted, yet the lowly he sees,  
and the proud he knows from afar.  
Your kindness, O LORD, endures forever;  
forsake not the work of your hands.

**R/ Lord, your love is eternal; do not forsake the work of your hands.**

**Introduction to the Second Reading:** St. Paul too was often amazed at how God operated, choosing him for example. Here he marvels at how different God's way of thinking is.

**Reading 2 [Rom 11:33-36](#)**

Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!  
How inscrutable are his judgments and how unsearchable his ways!

*For who has known the mind of the Lord  
or who has been his counselor?*

*Or who has given the Lord anything  
that he may be repaid?*

For from him and through him and for him are all things.  
To him be glory forever. Amen.

**Gospel [Mt 16:13-20](#)**

Jesus went into the region of Caesarea Philippi and  
he asked his disciples,

“Who do people say that the Son of Man is?”

They replied, “Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah,  
still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”

He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?”

Simon Peter said in reply,

“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

Jesus said to him in reply,

“Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah.

For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father.

And so I say to you, you are Peter,

and upon this rock I will build my church,

and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it.

I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven.

Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven;

and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

Then he strictly ordered his disciples

to tell no one that he was the Christ.

**Homily:** Many years ago I had the privilege of visiting the Holy Land. It was a wonderful experience. One of the places I went was Caesarea Philippi. It's way in the north on the border with Lebanon. Caesarea Philippi is well known for one thing. It is the source of the Jordan River.

The Holy Land is a tall narrow country. The Jordan River runs right down the middle of it. It starts in the north at Caesarea Philippi, runs into the Sea of Galilee, then down the center of the country and ends at the South end in the Dead Sea. Except for a few small tributaries it's the only river in the country. Everybody depends on it for water. The source of the Jordan is very different. Most sources or springs come up from the ground. This one comes out of the

middle of a huge cliff. You can see the water high up above you coming right out of the rock face. It is here that Jesus asks his disciples: "Who do people say that the son of man is?" Their answer sound odd to us. But in Jesus' day they thought that a great man had the spirit of a previous great man. So for example Elisha had the spirit of Elijah. Then Jesus asks: "But who do you say that I am?"

This is when Peter "shocks the socks" off of Jesus. He says: "You are the Christ (that is, the Messiah), the Son of the living God." It's the most perfect expression of who Jesus really is. It's absolutely accurate! Jesus was shocked almost beyond words. Peter? No way! There's no possible way he could have come up with that. It must be a direct inspiration from the Father. But through Peter? He was the most unlikely one of the bunch.

Do you remember who the four favorites of Jesus were? It was Peter, Andrew, James and John. This was the inner circle, the one he took with him to places he wouldn't take the others, and showed them things the others never saw, like the Transfiguration, and the raising of the 12 year old girl from the dead. Peter and Andrew were brothers, and their cousins James and John were brothers