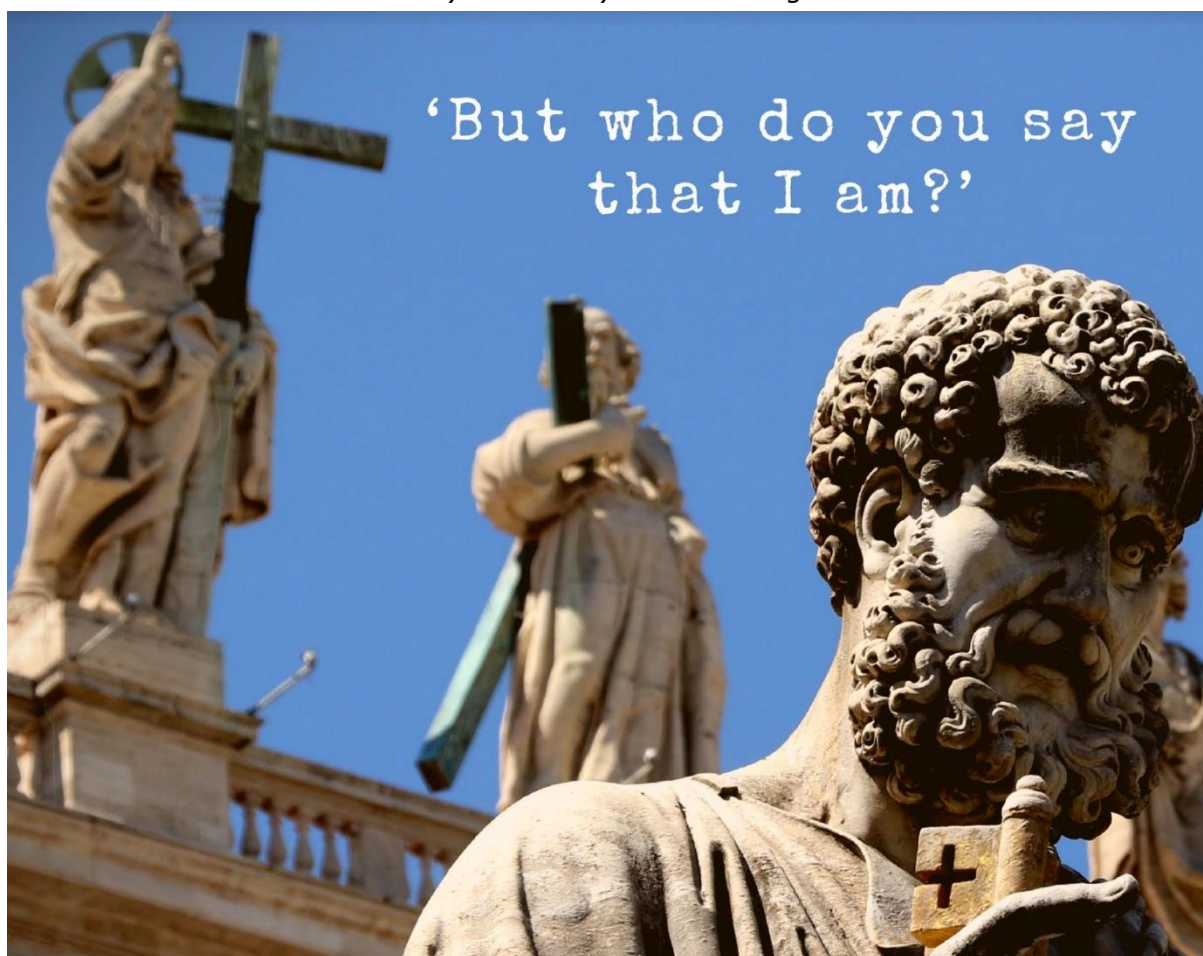


RESPONDING TO JESUS IN UNCERTAIN TIMES

21st Sunday in Ordinary time ~ 23 August 2020



Jesus and Peter, St. Peter's Basilica | public domain | edited www.stjosephsbrackenridge

LAST WEEK: THE CANAANITE WOMAN

Last week we heard in the Gospel that Jesus initially *'said not a word'* to the Canaanite woman.

She was living in uncertain times, her homeland occupied by the Roman army. After giving her space to come forward and ask for help for herself, Jesus commends her faith.

The space of sacred silence is an incredible gift to us.

FRIDAY NIGHT PRAYER VIGIL

Friday night prayer vigil in our parish is the beginning of my new week. After a few minutes of petition, those gathered share together, the gift of silence before the blessed Sacrament.

The silence of prayer together, in its gentleness on Friday evening, concludes my week and prepares me for the week ahead.

1879

In uncertain times of land reform and rural injustice,
and of the 1879 Mini-Famine in western Ireland,
Our Lady appeared on the 21st August in a small village
called 'Knock' in County Mayo in western Ireland.

She appeared to people in a region experiencing hunger,
and she *'said not a word.'*
She appeared with St Joseph on her right side,
and another, thought to be St John the Evangelist, on her left side.
They *'said not a word.'*
The left hand of John directed one's gaze to the simple altar
on which stood a lamb, perhaps two months old.
The lamb was in front of a cross standing upright on the altar.
An amazing experience of light surrounded them.
Though it was raining, no rain fell within the light.

Those who witnessed the apparition,
spoke later of the joy and peace they experienced.
One of the joys of my life has been the visits to Knock with family.

The silence that evening, on the 21st August 1879
gave a sacred space to the lives of the local witnesses,
and led to a **religious revival across Ireland.**

NEW COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS IN OUR AREA

Yesterday morning, we heard of new COVID-19 restrictions in our area,
as we live out our lives during the time of pandemic.

Like last week's Gospel and like the Mini-Famine in 1879,
we draw upon the beauty of silence in the presence of God
and find strength from God to make a difference during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

GOVERNANCE IN THE CHURCH

The Australian Catholic Bishops have now released an amended report on governance
['The Light from the Southern Cross: Promoting Co-Responsible Governance in the Catholic Church in Australia.'](#)

It is 208 pages in length and offers 86 recommendations.
With it comes a Reading guide and a press release.
Over the next months we can explore the documents together.
Let us turn now to this Sunday's gospel passage.

GOSPEL OF MATTHEW 16:13-20

In today's Gospel Jesus asks two questions of us.
The first question we can all answer.
The second question we can answer more intimately and personally
by entering the sacred place of Silence with God.

The first question of Jesus to the disciples is -

'Who do people say that the Son of Man is?'

It is sometimes easier to say what others think.

We can conduct surveys which are helpful.

We can go online to see what others say.

But the second question puts the disciples on the spot.

The second question is -

'But who do you say that I am?'

Let us invite Jesus now to put us on the spot.

How are we going to answer the question - 'But who do you say that I am?'

Note the response of Jesus:

'Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah!

For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. '

To say sincerely and from deep within, who Jesus really is –

involves both being blessed by God

and receiving this revelation from God.

Our belief, our response to Jesus, will affect the lives of others.

PETER

The response of Jesus continues:

***'And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church,
and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.***

***I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven,
and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven,
and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.'***

The gifting of the keys and God's recognition of the binding and loosing on earth are sacred gifts to Peter and the early church community.

The assurance will continue to inspire us through challenging times.

We could be tempted to become very negative about the world today.

In such pessimism, we forget the promise and assurance of Jesus

that ***'the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.'***

We enter the silence to be with God intimately.

Loved by God, we love of neighbour.

In our prayer are

moments of listening, of trial, of responding to God's Word,

of leading, of healing, of loving, of worshipping,

of celebrating, of giving thanks,

of asking for strength, of forgiving,

of giving counsel, of being firm, of being just,

of witnessing to Jesus in our lives.

COVID-19

In this present time of the COVID-19 Pandemic, we know uncertainty, fear and frustration. We also know the incredible efforts many people are making, In working for public safety and healing.

JESUS QUESTION

This week in our journey, in our sacred Silence, let us share with Jesus our response to his question

'But who do you say that I am?'

Let us open our hearts and minds to the gift of strength that comes from God.

In love, let us pray.

Fr Gerry

[Readings: <https://universalis.com/Australia/20200823/mass.htm>]

[Knock Shrine website](#)

[24 Livestream from the Knock Shrine Apparition Chapel](#)

['The Light from the Southern Cross: Promoting Co-Responsible Governance in the Catholic Church in Australia.'](#)

