

## Homily 21st Sunday of the Year

When Jesus asked his disciples who the Son of Man is, Peter experienced a revelation from God and replied: "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God." Through Peter's response, Matthew in his gospel conveys to the Church - to all of us - that Jesus is the anointed one of God. Our God is a living God who gives us life - human life and eternal life. Jesus has come so that we may have life and have it to the full.

Peter throughout the New Testament was considered the leader of the 12. Jesus has built his Church upon Peter the Rock. You might say that Peter was the prime minister of Jesus. The position of Peter was never regarded as a position of status. There can be no status in the Church. We are all equal through baptism as the sons and daughters of God. It was rather a position of authority to teach correctly the way to do God's will in the world and to do justice. Peter was given the authority to pass on the teachings of Jesus for every new situation that would arise in the Church. This authority was shared with the other apostles and with the Church as a whole. As Catholics we believe that the authority of Peter continues in the person of the Pope and that the authority of the apostles continues in the bishops. However, the Pope and the Bishops can never speak on their own authority, they must always speak in the name of what the whole Church has believed from the beginning. What we believe is contained in the Sacred Scriptures and in the Tradition of the Church. When Jesus gave the keys of the kingdom to Peter, and by extension to the apostles and to the Church He gave Peter the authority to apply the teachings of Jesus to ever new situations. This does not mean that the Church has all the answers but it does mean that the Church has the apostolic authority to be the light of Christ as we face all the contemporary challenges of living. While the Church speaks authoritatively through the Pope and the bishops, all of us as members of the Church must also ask what the will of God is.

What is God asking of us in addressing health care issues? What does God ask of us in matters of immigration? How does God want us to handle environmental issues? How does God want us to work for peace and the end of violence? Indeed we may come to different conclusions but you cannot divorce God from real life. You cannot say that religion is just a spiritual matter or a private relationship with God. Our obligation as Christians is to pray, to study, to be faithful to the teaching of Jesus as revealed in Sacred Scripture and Tradition and to reflect on our own experiences from a perspective of faith. Our human lives are the same as everyone else's but we have a faith that gives light on how to live in this world: how to govern; how to raise children; how to work; how to spend money; how to care for the earth; how to welcome strangers; how to promote racial equality; how to enjoy life; how to live and how to die.

We pray to Our Father: "thy will be done." All authority in the Church is to teach us how to do the will of God by following the Lord Jesus Christ. "Thy will be done."

Today we welcome the Vietnamese Cistercian Sisters and bless this holy place which will be a sacred location to pray, to listen to the Word of God, to study our Catholic faith, and to prayerfully reflect on what God is asking from each of us in our lives and in this world. We thank the Cistercian Sisters for their presence in our Diocese. They will work the land and pray for all of us. They are a gift from God for us.

Bishop Stephen Blaire