

BRINGING HOME THE GOSPEL

August 23, 2020 • 21st Sunday in Ordinary Time • Matthew 16:13–20

Just “Say” It

Jesus questions the faith of his disciples by asking them, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” The responded that some say he is John the Baptist, others believe him to be the prophet Elijah or Jeremiah. Peter answers, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” Jesus blesses him by giving him the keys to the kingdom, making him the head of the church.

Peter, the apostle who sank while trying to walk on water because of his lack of faith, receives Jesus’ highest affirmation. “You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it” (v. 18). Peter goes on to deny Jesus, repent, and eventually become the leader Jesus knew he could be.

Peter is so wonderfully human in all the stories we hear about him. He is impulsive, he blunders, and he makes mistakes. Sometimes he seems almost childlike when he is around Jesus. Perhaps it is that childlike quality in Peter that allows him to see who Jesus really is, the Christ, son of the living God.

Children can be so incredibly honest. They can see right through facades and superficial appearances to the core of a person or situation. They blurt out what they think, sometimes to our own embarrassment. They are as quick to forgive as they are to condemn.

Then, one day when they are eight or nine or ten, they begin to learn how to hide their thoughts and feelings. They begin to practice saying what they know or think we want them to say. They are maturing and this is good, but how can we help them keep the best of their childhood qualities and still be able to go out in polite society?

I think the process must have something to do with being consistent in our patience and love. It involves giving enthusiastic affirmations and gentle, private corrections. That is certainly how Jesus treated Peter, and look how well he turned out—first pope, leader of the church, and the holder of the keys.

FAMILY RESPONSE

Ask each person to name three things about themselves that they really like. Make sure you remind children to listen well. Do not allow any teasing or laughing.

PERSONAL RESPONSE

What childlike qualities do you need to claim or reclaim to make your life easier or more comfortable? What do you want to remember from last week? What are you looking forward to next week? What are your concerns?