

24th Sunday in Ordinary Time

The Gospels emphasise that the Son of Man came to serve, rather than to be served. Today we explore this, inspired by Jesus' example of service.

Isaiah 50:5-9

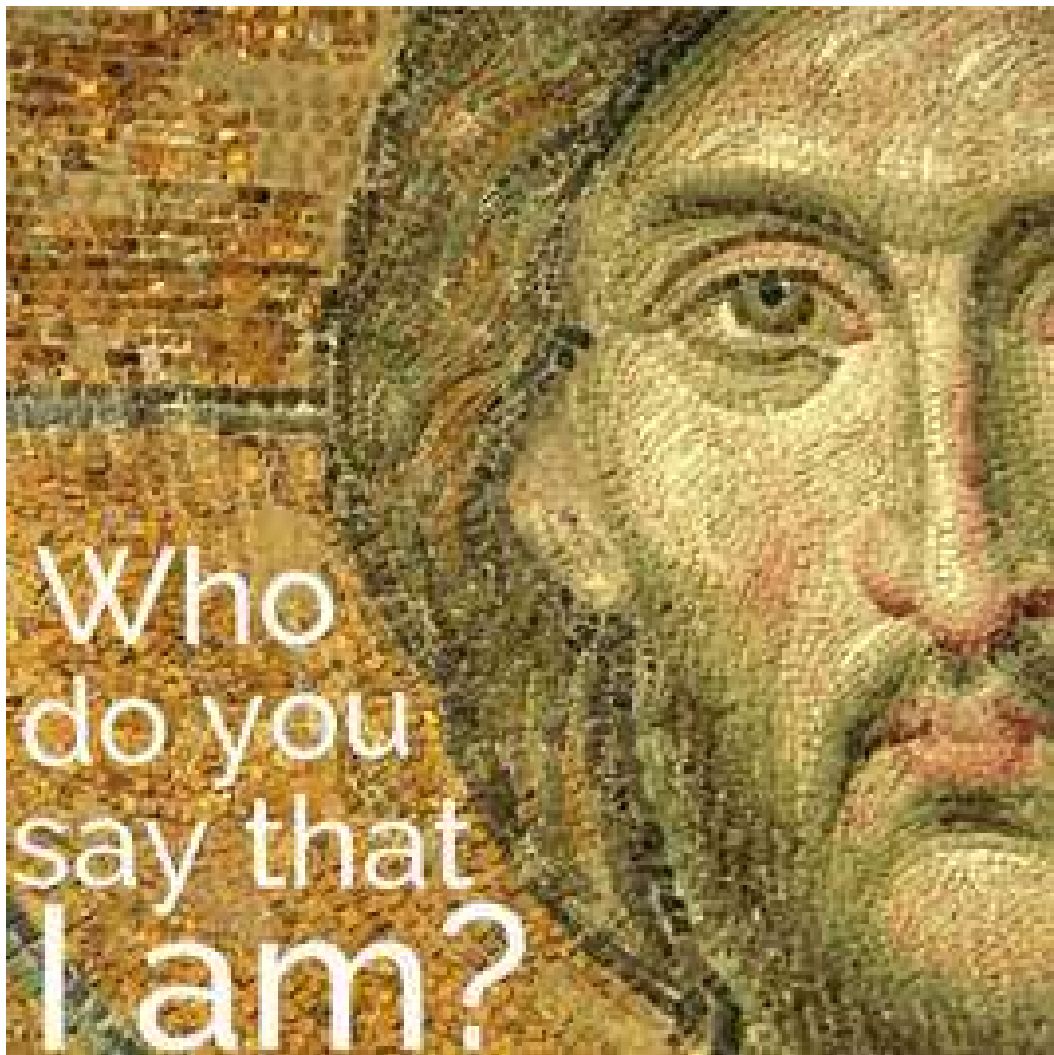
The anonymous servant of the Lord faces terrible persecution because of his preaching. He does not resist.

James 2:14-18

James maintains that the real sign of faith is putting that faith into practice.

Mark 8:27-35

Peter says, "You are the Christ," but he fails to see that the Christ must suffer.



Reflection

"WHO DO PEOPLE SAY THAT I AM?"

Jesus took his disciples to the area of Caesarea Philippi in northern Israel near Banias. In that place there was a cave dedicated to Pan, the Roman god of fields and forests. From the cave a stream flowed forth, which was the source of the Jordan River. Farther up on the hillside, a temple had been built to honour Caesar, the Roman Emperor, who was himself regarded as a god.

It was against this pagan background, that Jesus asked his disciples what people were saying about him. They told him the popular notions of the Messiah: a king of David's line, a conqueror who would destroy his enemies and restore Israel to power. Then Jesus put the question to them, "But who do you say that I am?" And through the gift of faith, Peter realized that Jesus, a simple carpenter from Nazareth, was the long-awaited Messiah, the One who would bring salvation to the world.

Jesus then explained the true meaning of being God's anointed one: He would suffer, be put to death on a cross, but would rise again. Peter could not comprehend a **suffering** Messiah and he reproached Jesus for saying this. But Jesus rebuked Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things".

Anyone who wished to follow Jesus must take up the cross, and share in Jesus' struggles and sufferings.

Answer Jesus question for yourself: **"WHO DO YOU SAY THAT I AM?"**



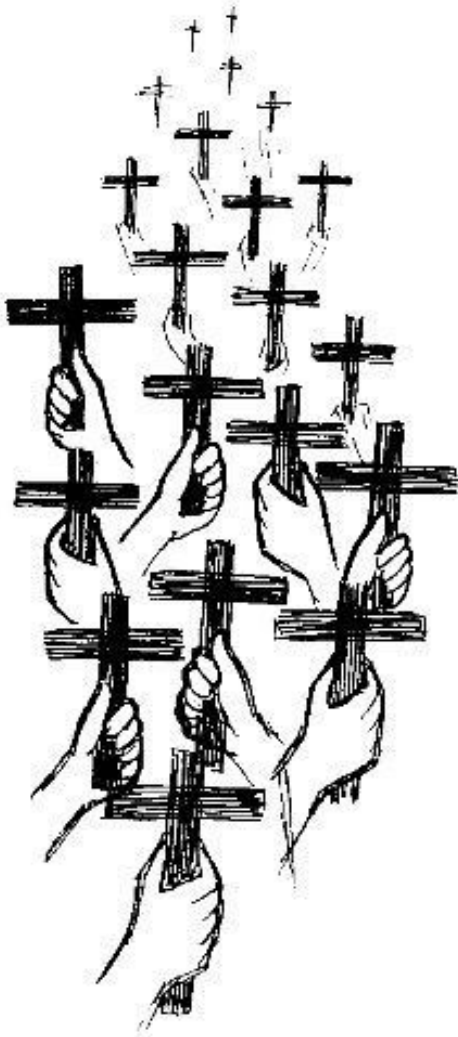
This incident in today's Gospel has a central place in Mark's Gospel; it's like a hinge in the narrative. Mark, up to now, has been repeatedly been asking the question "Who is this man?". The disciples had been living with Jesus for some time. They too were probing, asking: "Who was this one they were following?" From the time the disciples joined Jesus, they keep asking themselves this question: Who is he?" What really amazed them most was the authority with which he spoke, the power he had to heal people, and the love with which he brought God's forgiveness to sinners.

Who is this man in whom they sense God is present and near, always a friend offering life and forgiveness?

The time had now come to really clarify what they believed about Jesus.

There were plenty of rumours going about concerning Jesus among people and Jesus asks them about them.

Then Jesus asks his own disciples what their opinion is: "And you, who do you say I am?" This is a vital question for his closest followers. It is Peter, who answers for all of them: **"You are the Christ"**.



Peter's marvellous declaration leads Jesus to tell them about the reality of what he is facing; about his death by crucifixion at the hands of his enemies. They can't of course yet even suspect that his Father will raise him from the dead as his beloved Son. They haven't had experiences that will let them understand everything that lies hidden in Jesus. Only by following him closely will they gradually discover more with increasing faith.

For us, as Catholics, it is vitally important that we recognise and acknowledge with greater depth the mystery of Jesus, the Christ.

The church will not know itself if it does not know Christ. If it does not know him, it cannot know what is most essential and important about its task and mission. But in order to know and acknowledge Jesus Christ, it is not enough to mouth the wonderful titles we've given him. What is needed is to follow closely in his footsteps and to work with him day by day. This is the main task that we must promote in our Parishes and communities.

The central point in Mark's Gospel is in the middle of today's Gospel: between
"You are the Christ."

and

"The Son of Man is destined to suffer grievously."

From now onwards the face of Jesus is set towards Jerusalem and his sufferings and death. It is only at the time of the Crucifixion that there is another declaration of who Jesus is. This time, not from a Jew, like Peter, but from a pagan, the Centurion at the foot of the Cross; "**Indeed, this man was the Son of God!**"

GOSPEL WORDSEARCH

R	H	T	A	E	D	O	R	C	P	JESUS	QUESTION	JOHN	CHRIST
A	E	C	N	U	O	N	E	R	H	STRICT	SUFFER	ELDERS	DEATH
N	C	W	S	A	T	A	O	A	S	CROSS	PROPHETS	RENOUCE	LIFE
A	C	R	O	S	S	P	J	E	S				
T	H	H	I	L	H	I	R	S	U				
A	C	R	S	E	L	D	E	R	S				
S	H	I	T	E	E	O	F	E	N				
C	E	S	T	F	S	U	F	F	H				
W	N	O	I	T	S	E	U	Q	O				
O	L	L	O	F	S	U	S	E	J				