

24th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Know your true self and mission in life

Each year, the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops designates the Third Sunday in September as Catechetical Sunday. On this special day, we take time to honor all those who share in the evangelizing and teaching mission of the church. We recognize and celebrate the gifts that all catechists give to our parish community. We express our appreciation for them for their willingness to volunteer their time for the faith formation of our children. We pray that they may be blessed with all the graces they need to share their faith with our children and help them to grow in the knowledge and love of God and others. The theme for this year's celebration of Catechetical Sunday is "Lord, when did we see you hungry?" (Mathew 25:37). The theme reminds us of our call to discipleship, to follow Christ in love and service to him and others.

While contemplating the scripture readings for this Sunday's liturgy, four questions came to mind. I kept asking: Do I know my true self and purpose in life? Do I know myself more than others? How do people perceive me? And do I care how others perceive me?

Like many of us, Jesus cared about the public opinion of himself. He sought to know what others thought of him or perceived him to be. In today's gospel, Jesus asked his disciples two important questions, "Who do people say that I am?" and who do you say that I am?"

The disciples said to Jesus in reply: "Some say you are John the Baptist, others say, Elijah; still others, one of the ancient prophets."

Jesus wanted a more personal response. He asked his disciples, "What about you? Who am I for you?" Peter spoke on behalf of the other disciples. He answered, "You are the Christ." Peter provided the correct answer but he had a partial insight of Jesus' identity, not a Suffering Servant of God as foretold by the prophet Isaiah in the first reading. He saw Jesus as a political savior, the one to set his people free from the Roman domination and usher in a great period of restoration and renewal.

Jesus approved Peter's answer and from this point he disclosed to his disciples what it meant to be the Christ. As Messiah, he will suffer greatly at the hands of the elders. He will die and rise again in three days. Jesus called his disciples to embrace his path, to take up their cross and follow him. Peter tried to talk Jesus out of his impending passion and death. He got himself into trouble. Jesus rebuked him and addressed him as Satan. He told Peter "Get behind Me, Satan."

Jesus was hard on Peter because he saw him as an obstacle or hindrance to his mission.

He invites all of us to take up our cross and follow him. This call involves putting our faith into action. In the second reading St. James talks about the relationship between faith and works. He reminds us that faith without works is useless or dead.

As Christians, let us do our best to manifest our faith in our actions by helping and supporting the needy, the sick, and the poor among us.

Let us be a sign of Christ's love and care for all those we encounter each day in our lives.

God bless,

Rev. Dr. Ben