

CONNECT! SUNDAY REFLECTION

21th Sunday in Ordinary Time | For Sunday, August 23, 2020

Who Do We Say That Jesus Is?

Written by Douglas Sousa, S.T.L.

Isaiah 22:19-23

Romans 11:33-36

Matthew 16:13-20



As election day draws near, the media will treat us to a steady diet of daily polls. The latest Rasmussen poll, Gallup poll, ABC News poll, or Zogby poll will be leading the evening news, informing us about the opinions of the American public, especially about who should be president. It will all be broken down by race, by economic status and by age. We will learn which candidate middle class voters prefer, which candidate young voters prefer, and who has the best chance of winning the so-called “swing states.” When election day is finally over, the polling will still go on. We’ll learn from the pollsters why people voted the way they did and how happy they were with their choice.

In this Sunday’s Gospel, Jesus takes a poll of his disciples. He asks them what people are saying about him, who they say he is. He wants to know if the authority of his teaching and the power of his miracles had convinced the people that he was the Messiah. But, from what the disciples could tell him, the people believed that he was no more than a prophet — no greater than Elijah, Jeremiah or John the Baptist.

Then, Jesus turns the question on them: “Who do YOU say that I am?” We can imagine that some of the disciples were taken off guard and may have hung their heads, avoiding eye contact with Jesus because they weren’t quite sure how to answer. But Simon, son of John, does not miss a beat. He boldly stands up and answers Jesus in front of everyone: “You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God!” Simon Peter’s profession of faith is bold because not only does he recognize Jesus to be the Messiah, the one who would save Israel, but because he also recognizes Jesus to be God Himself — God made man.

If we were to take a poll of public opinion about Jesus, he might get a high approval rating but there would be different opinions about who he is. Some would say he is just another voice in the history of humanity, no different than Confucius, Muhammad or maybe even Oprah Winfrey. In the world's eyes, it doesn't really matter if you believe in Jesus or believe in something or someone else. As they say, "It's all good." If you decide that Jesus isn't the one for you, you can find salvation somewhere else. To the world, it's all relative.

We know well what the world says about Jesus. But, the Gospel turns the question on us. Who do I say Jesus is? Is Jesus just another voice among many others throughout history, or, is Jesus THE voice of God the Father? Is Jesus just one way to salvation and everlasting life; or is Jesus THE way, the only way? Do we pick and choose the teachings of Jesus which we understand and agree with and ignore the rest; or do we believe that every word Jesus speaks is THE word of God which we must struggle to understand, accept and obey? And do we believe that the Church Jesus built on Peter's profession of faith is necessary for our salvation, or do we think we can do it on our own?

We don't know who our president in January 2021 will be, but we do know that Jesus will still be Lord. Politicians will tell us that everything hinges on this election, but that's not true. Everything hinges on whether or not we accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Messiah. Everything hinges on whether or not we live out that faith in him.

Douglas Sousa, S.T.L.

PRAYER

Jesus,
We believe that you are Lord and Christ.
We believe that you are the Way,
the Truth, and the Life.
We believe that you have the
words of everlasting life.
Give us the courage to follow you,
To live out our faith with conviction,
And to serve others with boldness.
May our faith be a source of healing
And unity in our divided land.
We ask this in your name.
Amen.