

21st Sunday in Ordinary Time

Homily: Fr. Shijo George

Pastor – Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Victoria, BC, Canada

In today's Gospel, Jesus conducts an exam. It is a very simple exam with just one question: "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?"

In answer, the disciples give Him the answers they have heard from people: "Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." These are respectable answers, but not the right answer. Those people may have known about Jesus, but they did not really know who Jesus is.

Then Jesus conducts the second part of the exam. This time, the question is addressed not to the crowd but to His own disciples: "But who do you say that I am?"

Peter, speaking on behalf of the disciples, gives the answer: "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." Yes! Peter passed the exam. He did not simply repeat what he had heard from others; he expressed his own faith in Jesus. As a result, Jesus responds with the beautiful: "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven."

My dear brothers and sisters, the same Jesus conducts that same exam today. He now asks each one of us: "Who do you say that I am?" There is no possibility of copying in this exam. We cannot simply repeat Peter's answer. We cannot borrow our parents' faith, our priest's faith, or somebody else's experience. Each one of us has to give a personal answer.

At first, the answer to this question may seem very easy. We have learned about Jesus from the Bible, from catechism, from our parents, from the Church, and from our prayers. We may know many things about Him, but Jesus is asking for something deeper than the knowledge in our heads. He is asking for the experience of our hearts.

I may know everything about Jesus and still not really know Jesus. I may know that He is the Son of God, the Messiah, and my Saviour; yet when I face a crisis, I may live as though



He is not there. I may call Him “Lord” with my lips, but do I really allow Him to be the Lord of my life?

That is why the answer to this question depends on the relationship that we have with Jesus. Who is Jesus to ME? Is He simply someone I worship on Sunday? Is He someone I turn to only when I have a problem? Is He simply a name I have known since childhood? Or is He truly my Lord, my Saviour, my companion, my strength, and the centre of my life?

Perhaps Jesus is asking each of us today: “You know what others say about Me. But what do you say about Me? Who am I for you?”

Perhaps the most beautiful answer is not something we say with our lips, but something we show through our lives. If Jesus is truly my Lord, it should be visible in the way I forgive, the way I love, the way I treat my family, the way I respond to suffering, and the way I live when nobody is watching.

So today, Jesus is not conducting an exam to see how much theology we know; He is conducting an exam for our hearts, with only one question: “Who do you say that I am?”

May our answer not merely come from our memory or our rational intellect, but from our personal experience of Him.

May we be able to say, like Peter, not merely with our lips but with our whole life: “Jesus, You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God. You are my Lord. You are my Saviour. You are everything to me.”