

Rev. Toan Do
Isaiah 22: 19-23
Romans 11: 33-36
Matthew 16: 13-20

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
EPIPHANY CATHOLIC CHURCH
Louisville KY, USA
August 23, 2026

What does it take the church, our community, what does it take each of us individually to be able to confess and profess, as Peter did, that Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God?

That statement that Peter tells us today in the gospel implies that God has revealed His identity. God has revealed Himself to some, maybe to all, but not all of them have been able to come forward and confess and profess that statement about Jesus Christ being the Son of the living God. There are several components in that statement that we heard today. The first are the titles of Christ. In biblical language, it is sometime understood as the Messiah, One who saved the people of God. The second one is the Son, a human being, God's Son. The third, and I would say the most important component in this statement is that the proclamation of God being the living One. Not God of the dead, not God of anything, but God the One of the Living. What does it take our community, our faith community, and what does it take each of us to be able to come to profess and confess Jesus to be Christ, the Son of the living God?

Evidently, Matthew seemed to play on words, at least the name of Peter. As we know that the name of Peter is very Greek, Greco-Roman traditions. The word Peter in Greek, Petros, means rock. In other instances, for example, Paul often used the name Cephas or sometimes we pronounce it as Sehfuhez. It is an Aramaic word for rock also. Then also to call Simon is the word from Hebrew for Peter's original or first name. The evangelist, Matthew, is playing on the word for Peter as Jesus named him to be the rock upon which the church was built. Here is the only instance in the four gospels that the word church, as in Greek ecclesia, means the assembly. In the older form of that we often heard, for example, the word Kahau in Hebrew and, for example, the Book of Ecclesiastes, community, or the group of people who come together to worship in Jewish tradition.

Synagogue, of course, in the time of Jesus was also used for Jews to come to, example, in the temple as a synagogue or a house gathering. Somehow the play on words, example, Peter and ecclesia (church) has been spread out into regions,

different regions beyond Judeo tradition into now Gentile. We recall last week, when Jesus was wandering or walking into a region of non-Jew Tyre and Sidon, He encountered a Cannonite woman. That person, a non-Jew, came to Jesus begging Him as the Son of David, not yet God or the Son of God, as the Son of David to heal her daughter. Jesus extended God's grace and her daughter was healed. This weekend, once again, Jesus is in the region of Caesarea Philippi. The two words implies or at least informs us, Jesus was still in the region beyond the Jewish territory into the Gentile region, Caesarea (Roman), Philippi (Greek).

Now, the test is that what do people outside a Jewish circle say about the identity of Jesus? I mentioned the word earlier, somehow God has revealed Himself to some and maybe to all, but not all have been able to come forward and proclaim, profess, and confess Jesus. A human appeared as one of us to be the Son of the living God. In this region, the question was posed not only to His disciples, the immediate circle of Jesus' disciples most likely were all Jewish disciples. Peter is one of them. But also, Jesus poses the question, what are all other people, non-Jews, saying about the Son of man? Of course, we recall last week, this woman, Cannonite woman, proclaimed Him to be yet the Son of David. Today some say that Jesus was Elijah. Others say Jeremiah, some also say that He was one of the prophets, yet the revelation seemed to come but was not fully accepted.

Peter, on behalf of his disciples and say on behalf of all humanity proclaimed Jesus to be Christ, the Son of the living God. It takes God's gift of revelation because not any human flesh or blood that had been revealed to Peter to be able to say so. God's revelation to Peter himself to be able to come and confess and profess Jesus who appeared as a human like us to be God's Son. That is the biblical interpretation. The church, and of course, our Christian church after Jesus for centuries now have interpreted this very passage from Matthew to be the representative, the rock upon which Jesus built His community. Jesus built the community of those who worship God, believe in the living God, and profess Jesus to be God's Son. That is on a macro level, on a micro level, questions Jesus posed also resonates to each and all of us. What does it take each of us here, individually? What does it take me or you, your family to be able to come and profess publicly that Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God?

I mentioned in the announcements last week, in the last couple of weeks Epiphany has lost five members. All of them were faithful children of God. All of them were faithful members of Epiphany. I've known each of them. It was very painful to see so many members leaving. Three of them went in one day. One person at 3:00 AM, one at 3:00 PM, and one at 8:00 PM. The person who went at 8:00 PM, two days before I was called to the hospital at Baptist East. The family requested me to come. We had a funeral, a big funeral in the morning on Friday. So, after the burial,

I went, it was Bill Carrico. Two of his daughters were there with two of his granddaughters. Bill, if any of us remember him or knew him, he never missed mass here unless he was sick or home bound. He never missed one day or one weekend. In fact, just seven days before he passed away, he was here on the second pew, right here. I went to the hospital and learned that his liver was given out. His organs were no longer functioning at the age of, few weeks shy of 97 years old. He still appeared joyful, appeared faithful, appeared yearning for the living God. As always, I chatted away making some humorous comments to lighten up the sadness that prevails in the hospital room because his daughters were crying. His granddaughters were crying also, he was such a great father and grandfather. So, after that I asked him, "Bill, would you like to be anointed, receive the sacrament on behalf of the church?" Sacraments that we believe at this very beautiful moment. God heals your injury. God heals your wounds, body and soul. Gladly, he said, "Yes." Of course, I began with a prayer through the book of pastoral care for the sick. During the time when we prayed the Our Father, he closed his eyes and prayed the words that Jesus taught faithfully. Reminding myself of this gospel today, not only that, the first reading from Isaiah and second reading from Paul's Letter to the Romans, the three scripture readings allows us to see that Peter at one point was able to come and profess and confess publicly Jesus to be Christ, the Son of God. Also, on an individual and micro level, parishioners, members of God's faithful like Bill Carrico, a micro level at the dying bed was able to say with such firm faith in God and pray for God's will.

He was such a witness as Peter 2,000 years ago, witness to the church that survived to this day. Bill, one of our parishioners, one of our faithful members, as of course many others, did just that. Today, scripture reminds us, not only we profess and confess Jesus to be the Son, the Christ, the Son of the living God, as a community each of us are encouraged, challenged to continue to do that until the very last moments of our lives. Let's follow Peter. Let us imitate Bill Carrico and many faithful members of Epiphany who have gone before us to profess and confess Jesus the Christ, the Son of God. God has revealed His grace and blessing on all of us as a community, on each and every one of us as members of God's church.