

Our Very Human Church August 23, 2020

Isaiah 22: 15-23; Psalm 138; Romans 11: 33-36; Matthew 16: 13-20

God knows what he is doing and does them for our education and wellbeing even though they are beyond our understanding. Today's Gospel reading gives us a clear example of the inscrutable judgement of God. Jesus gives the keys of the Kingdom to Peter saying, "Whatever you bind on earth would be bound in heaven, whatever you declare loose on earth would be loose in heaven."

The Lord could have had many ways of establishing His church. Among many ways, but he chose human minds and hearts like Peter, and other apostles and their followers. Peter was a good man, a man of faith, but once in a while his vision would be clouded. He was a man who could walk on water to the Lord, but then doubt. His life was an ordinary life of failures than success. He often started out well, but then let his humanity effect his actions. For example, after Pentecost when the Church was in its first days, Peter realized that Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians were equal. Yet, at Antioch, he ignored the Gentiles in favour of the Jews. Peter was a holy man, but still, a man, and as a man he made mistakes.

On the positive side, Peter was a man who grew in his faith. He was a determined fisherman who worked with Jesus accepting the obligations and responsibilities of leadership over the other apostles. Many of the other apostles and leaders were far better educated than he was. Think about Paul who had very good education as the student of the great teacher Gamaliel. Yet Paul referred his teaching and inspirations with Peter for veracity. Jesus had already commissioned him as the leader of the church and the Holy Spirit confirmed it at Pentecost. Peter may have ran away from Jesus at crucifixion and denied him before Pentecost. But after Pentecost experince, he embraced suffering for

witnessing the Gospel teaching and left everything for Jesus. Peter, this man of Galilee, whose longest trip had been to Jerusalem, was able to travel to Rome as a leader of the Church. This man who fled the crucifixion of Jesus, accepted his own crucifixion asking to be crucified head down.

When we consider the human failings of all the Popes who followed Peter, including those who would be canonized saints, we have to recognize the hand of the Holy Spirit in the very life of the Church. Christ gave His authority to the rock, even though some of those who exercised this authority let their humanity. In spite of failures of some of the popes, our church is alive and is flourishing. Why? Because the Church is far more than individuals. It is the Body of Christ guided by the Holy Spirit

Human frailty is not more powerful than Divine Grace. When I think of some of the ways in which I, as an ordained leader have let my humanity get in the way of my responsibility, and yet still witness the wonderful ways the Lord who uses me for others. I realize that God's power is far greater than my own limitations. After forty-one years of my priesthood, I am shocked at the way the Lord uses me despite my human failings.

I am sure that there are situations in your own lives that you feel the same way. You also might have recognized the Lord's presence in your lives and decisions, despite your own human failings. We, the confirmed, are entrusted with the responsibility of leading others to the Lord. We recognize that we do not do this all alone. We allow the hand of the Lord to work his wonders through us. Today's gospel reading, "You are Peter and upon this rock I will build my Church" leads us to make an act of faith in the Lord who uses human beings, you and me, to proclaim his wonders. May God bless you! +++ Amen.

Fr. Thomas