



Bringing Home the Word

Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)
August 23, 2026

The Jesus Question

Fr. Joseph Juknialis

Over the years, I've asked many people what they believe about Jesus and who he is for them. I've always nudged them away from the expected answer simply because I was interested in who he was for them down deep in their spirits. It's been a whole wheelbarrow full of answers, yes it has, a full and varied garden. Some said they thought he was a very good human being, though they hedged when I asked if they thought he was also of God. Others thought he was a prophet, though they also backed away from anything that hinted of the divine.

Sunday Readings

Isaiah 22:19–23

What he opens, no one will shut,
what he shuts, no one will open.

Romans 11:33–36

For from him and through him and
for him are all things. To him be
glory forever.

Matthew 16:13–20

[Jesus said,] "You are Peter, and
upon this rock I will build my Church,
and the gates of the netherworld
shall not prevail against it."

For some, Jesus was God dressed in human skin, as if he were simply playing at being human. Some labeled him a reformer, and others a teacher. None of them dismissed Jesus as irrelevant or a remnant of the past. And for many, Jesus is the truth professed by Peter: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." He is the Word made flesh, the wisdom of God among us, the one who lives.

In one way or another, all of us must answer the question Jesus asks of his disciples in today's gospel: "Who do you say that I am?" The question is just as relevant today as it was when Jesus asked it. For some, their yes is without doubt. For others, it is a questioning journey of coming to faith. All of us are faced with that question: Who is Jesus for us today in the way we live our lives? †



All of us must answer the question Jesus asks: "Who do you say that I am?"

A Word from Pope Leo XIV

I genuinely hope that our Christian lifestyle will always reflect this fraternal, "Samaritan" spirit—one that is welcoming, courageous, committed, and supportive, rooted in our union with God and our faith in Jesus Christ. Enkindled by this divine love, we will surely be able to give of ourselves for the good of all who suffer, especially our brothers and sisters who are sick, elderly, or afflicted.

MESSAGE ON WORLD DAY OF THE SICK, ROME, FEBRUARY 11, 2026



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- Who do you say Jesus is?
- How does your answer make a difference in your life?



Why Virtue Matters

Christopher M. Bellitto

It can be hard to talk about virtues and vices because they've been tangled in decades of culture wars and politics. We hear it all the time: my values are good; yours are bad.

But that doesn't make much sense. Surely, we can agree that good judgment and discretion help us make positive decisions for ourselves and others. Who would argue that grounding yourself in courage and fortitude is a bad thing? Yet, here we are, a time in which being a moderate is now a radical position because arguments on most issues seem dominated by the loudest voices on the far right or far left. Here's where that leaves us: We can either be grumpy or try to make things better.

Dante Alighieri (1265–1321) is someone who tried to teach us how to make things better. He is the poet from Florence who had a vision of hell, purgatory, and heaven that he described colorfully in his *Divine Comedy*. He wrote this masterpiece after a series of bitter personal and career setbacks in his late thirties—middle age in the Middle Ages.

This book draws insights from Dante's walk through the three tiers, titled *Inferno*, *Purgatorio*, and *Paradiso*. As we go, we will note his fundamental lesson: to learn a virtue, you often need to understand its corresponding vice—even purge it out in the aptly named purgatory, if that's what it takes.

Living virtuously is a state of mind, a disposition, and a foundational way of engaging the world. Virtues are tendencies and good habits. Vices are these things, too: tendencies, dispositions, bad habits. Living virtuously makes us better people, and being better people means helping others. Our goal should be to learn to live virtuous lives like it's a good habit. Practice makes us as perfect as we can be, given that we're human. †

Living virtuously makes us better people, and being better people means helping others.

From *Walking Toward Virtue: A Journey with Dante* by Christopher M. Bellitto, © Liguori Publications 2026 (828874). For more information, call 800-325-9521 or visit Liguori.org.

Wisdom from Catholic Update

From "Who Is Jesus?" by Leonard Foley, OFM

Saul of Tarsus thought he knew all the answers. Then, one day, on the road to Damascus, he found himself flat on his back. Someone was bigger than him after all. "Who are you, sir?" he asks. Jesus told him. (See Acts 9:1–9.) In darkness, in prayer, in consultation with those who had seen Jesus, Saul (who later became known as Paul) learned the Lord. He spent the rest of his life being a lightning rod through whom the power of Jesus surged into the world. *Who are you, Lord?* It is a question every Christian should ask every day, hoping to experience more deeply the man who was God.

Catholic Update—a subscription newsletter published eleven times a year—explores Church tradition and teaching on contemporary topics. For more information, call 800-325-9521 or visit Liguori.org.



For the Church: for the courage to preach the gospel, to give voice to the voiceless, to stand with those treated unjustly, and to minister to those in need. Amen.

The Redemptorists

WEEKDAY READINGS

August 24–29

Monday, St. Bartholomew: Rv 21:9b–14 / Jn 1:45–51

Tuesday, Weekday: 2 Thes 2:1–3a, 14–17 / Mt 23:23–26

Wednesday, Weekday: 2 Thes 3:6–10, 16–18 / Mt 23:27–32

Thursday, St. Monica: 1 Cor 1:1–9 / Mt 24:42–51

Friday, St. Augustine: 1 Cor 1:17–25 / Mt 25:1–13

Saturday, Passion of St. John the Baptist: 1 Cor 1:26–31 / Mk 6:17–29



Catholic.
Pastoral.
Trusted.

© 2026 Liguori Publications, a ministry of the Redemptorists. Scripture quotations in this publication are from *The New American Bible, revised edition*, © 2010, 1991, 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Washington, DC. The quotations from Pope Leo XIV are printed with permission, copyright © Dicastero per la Comunicazione–Libreria Editrice Vaticana. All rights reserved. 1-800-325-9521. Liguori.org.