

Commentary on the Readings for Today, August 23, 2026

The 21st Sunday in Ordinary Time

While attending Mass today or any Sunday, if you were asked to go up before the congregation and explain why you are a Catholic, what would you say? Think for a moment; what would you say? This is essentially what Jesus was asking His apostles: "**Who do YOU say that I am?**" There was no Church as we know it today, so everything depended upon one's knowledge and faith in one person, Jesus Christ. Could we then, or now, say as Peter did: "**You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.**" This would be a tough question for most of us to answer either in private or before a congregation, but that is exactly what Jesus is asking of us every day. "**Who do you say that I am?**" He wants to know, and He wants us to know just where we stand on this subject.

In the **First Reading**, from the **Prophet Isaiah (22:19- 23)**, we hear only a small portion of the instructions the Prophet Isaiah gives to Eliakim, the messenger of King Hezekiah of Jerusalem. These instructions were essentially the same as Jesus asks Peter. Isaiah is saying to Eliakim, "**In whom are you putting your trust? You profess to believe in the God of Israel, so now act upon that belief; otherwise you will hang like dishes.**" (For the full text of this story go to **2 Kings 18 and 19**). If we say we are Catholic, if we say we believe in the God in Jesus Christ, then we must show it through our speech and actions.

The **Responsorial Psalm (138:1-8)** is a prayer of thanksgiving that King Hezekiah might have offered after God turned back the Assyrian general at the gates of Jerusalem. The essence of this prayer is the phrase, "**When I called, you answered me.**" God is waiting for us to call. Do we have enough trust?

In the **Second Reading**, from **St. Paul's Letter to the Romans (11:33-36)**, we hear Paul extol the Wisdom of God in His divine Plan of Salvation. Paul is quoting several Old Testament statements of belief which acknowledge God's wisdom in giving the gift of faith first to the Jews and then to Christians. Together, we should complement one another for the "greater honor and glory of God."

The **Gospel Reading** is from **Matthew (16:13-20)**. We have all heard this story many times, and yet, do we really get the message? In these few lines, we hear Jesus question all the Apostles, but it is Peter who gives the ultimate answer. Could we do the same? Jesus then goes on to give Peter the "keys to the kingdom of heaven." This is a symbolic phrase. It is not "keys" literally, but rather authority. Thus, the Church is established, the Kingdom of God has begun. Now, can you answer the question, "Why are you a Catholic?" and "Who is Jesus to YOU?" Something to think about during your prayer time this week!

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