

A Question, an Answer and a Prediction

12th Sunday in Ordinary Time

In today's gospel, we are presented with a question, an answer and a prediction. For Jesus' disciples the truth about who he is and what is to come of him is a reality that is difficult to comprehend.

Jesus' ministry is in full motion; the crowds continue to press in upon him in the wake of his miracles and teachings. His popularity is growing. He has little time to himself. So today, he seeks the solitude of prayer. Prayer is the focal point of his ministry. Jesus relies on his prayerful relationship with the Father to seek direction and guidance. In the wake of prayer, he asks his apostles a question. **"Who do the crowds say that I am?"** This is the question that is central to any disciple of Christ, including us. Who is this man? Is he a prophet? A great teacher? Just another nice guy?

Peter supplies the answer: **"The Christ of God."** For the people of Jesus' time, they would have been looking for a king, a warrior who would powerfully reunite the kingdom. They were waiting for someone of military strength to lead the people. Jesus knows this about them. **"He rebuked them and directed them not to tell this to anyone."** Why does Jesus tell them not to say anything about him being the Christ of God?

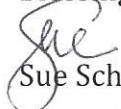
The reason lies at the heart of the gospel. To be the anointed one of God is not to come as a warrior. Jesus has come as the Divine messenger of love. Jesus has come to return the human race back toward peace, justice and mercy. Jesus knows that his concept of Messiahship is not what the people are looking for. He knows that his disciples do not yet understand his mission and what will be asked of them.

Now Jesus presents to them the prediction, the truth about himself. **"The Son of Man must suffer greatly and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed and on the third day be raised."** This is the first of three predictions about Jesus' impending death. This is the hard reality that is to come for those who follow Jesus' way of love. Jesus' mission will not be one of military might, a conquering soldier. Rather Jesus' mission is to teach us how to be human, loving each other including our enemies.

In the wake of the Orlando shootings this week, what is our response? Do we want to live in peace, justice and mercy. Or are we looking for a military solution? Are we looking to overpower evil with might? I understand all too well that there are no simple answers to these difficult questions.

If we prayerfully turn to Christ in our need, he supplies the answer. **"If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up this cross daily and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it."**

Blessings!


Sue Schettler