

In this week's Gospel (Mt 16:13-20), Jesus asks His disciples two questions:

- 1) "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?"
- 2) "But who do you say that I am?"

The replies given by Jesus' disciples ultimately distinguish the Christian from the non-Christian. In answer to the first question, "People" say Jesus is merely a prophet of some sort. In answer to the second, the disciples



(through Peter) say, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." There is a world of difference between these two responses! Peter somehow recognizes that Jesus is much more than a prophet, He is God's Son! According to Jesus, Peter's response was not revealed by "flesh and blood" but by God the Father Himself! "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah. For flesh and

blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father." The question comes to mind, how did God prepare Peter to receive such a sublime truth of faith?

Pope Benedict XVI offers us a profound explanation:

In Luke ... Peter's confession is connected with a prayer event. Luke begins his account of the story with a deliberate paradox: "As he was praying alone, the disciples were with him" (Lk 9:18). The disciples are drawn into his solitude, his communion with the Father that is reserved to him alone. They are privileged to see him as the one who ... speaks face-to-face with the Father, person to person. They are privileged to see him in his utterly unique filial being — at the point from which all his words, his deeds, and his powers issue. They are privileged to see what the "people" do not see, and this seeing gives rise to a recognition that goes beyond the "opinion" of the people. This seeing is the wellspring of their faith, their confession; it provides the foundation for the Church. (Pope Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth*, p. 291).

The Pope goes on to explain that the disciples gained a deeper knowledge of who Jesus was by their many days of being his disciples: by participation in "his way" — his attitudes, his actions, his way of seeing and being in the world. In other words, by tasting and seeing the way Jesus lived, by being with Him and praying with Him — being "drawn into his solitude, his communion with the Father" — they were prepared to receive saving faith as a gift from God the Father.

Today, Jesus invites each of us to learn more deeply "His way" — to observe and acquire His way of seeing and acting, to follow Him, and so to become his disciples. Our confession of faith, like Peter's, is not born of "flesh and blood;" it is ultimately connected with a prayer event. Only after spending time in prayerful solitude with Jesus, thinking of Him and expressing our love for Him, can we respond with supernatural certainty: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God!"

Your Servant in Christ,
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