

24 Sunday Ordinary Time B 2018  
September 16  
Frazee/Callaway

Who do people say that I am?

I wonder why Jesus would ask this question. It is as if he is insecure. Let's survey the people. If 51% of them think that I am a carpenter, then I better get back to building. Of the remaining 49%, if a majority of them think that I am a prophet, then I will arrange some prophetic seminars on the weekends: I will be a carpenter prophet. If a few people think that I am John the Baptist, well they are just crazy. BUT we don't want to leave anyone behind, so in public I will occasionally eat locusts and honey and wear camel hair when I give my prophetic seminars on the weekends.

This doesn't make any sense. Jesus was never driven by the opinions of people. He was driven by his singular desire to do the will of the Father.

Who do people say that I am? Jesus wanted to know what was filling the heads and the hearts of his disciples. He wanted to know the hurdles they needed to leap in on order to have hearts opened to the truth.

Jesus looks at you and asks, "Who do people say that I am?" He wants to know what is filling your mind regarding his Church. He wants to know what hurdles you need to overcome in order to come to him in faith. So, what is it that fills your minds and hearts?

Friday evening at a groom's dinner a non-Catholic, 84-year-old lady said to me, "Your Church is really struggling." I responded, "Yes, it is a mess." We don't like it when the Church is a mess. It is a good time to remember that we are the Church, both militant and triumphant.

The militant is the Church on earth. It reflects both the best of human nature and the worst of it. Every goodness of which people are capable exists in the Church. You don't have to look around too long to see people who overflow with love and mercy because Jesus possesses their hearts, feeds them with his body and blood,

heals them with his oil and teaches them with his word. There is love and beauty here, here and now.

The militant Church reflects the worst of human nature. Every sin that exists in the world exists in the Church. This is true now, and it has always been true. It may be particularly painful today because the sins of many are being revealed. It is ugly, and we don't like it. It is not the time to cower in shame or fear. It is a time to stand up and bring the light of Jesus even into his Church.

It would be willfully naïve for us to think that the Church and our leaders are all saints. It would be willfully judgmental of us to believe none of them are.

The Church is both militant and triumphant. Jesus Christ rose from the dead and opened the gates of heaven. We are created for heaven and the sacraments and sacramentals; our prayers and our saints show us the way of goodness and truth.

When death approaches, people often seem to have one foot on earth and one foot in heaven. They see deceased loved ones and talk to them as if they are in the room. We forget that this is always true for all of us. We have been created in God's likeness. In baptism we have been cleansed from sin and given a new birth to innocence by water and the Spirit. We are now citizens of both heaven and earth.

Jesus asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" "People say that you are the captain of the Titanic. People say that your Church is a mess. People say that you are absent. People say that your vicar and the successors of your apostles are self-serving, self-preserving, power-hungry, depraved men. Is this what fills our minds and hearts.

And then of course Jesus asks the more important question, "Who do you say that I am?"

You are the Christ.

We are committed to following Jesus: We must deny ourselves, take up our cross and lose our lives. He never promised anything else.