

Homily (notes) from Canon Philip Dyson  
**27th August 2023 - 21st Sunday in Ordinary Time**

Readings (Year A): 1st: Isaiah 22:19-23. 2nd: Romans 11:33-36. **Gospel:** Matthew 16:13-20.

Midway through his public ministry Jesus has ventured with his disciples to the northern reaches of the Promised Land to Caesarea-Philippi, near the present-day Golan Heights, captured in the 6 day 1967 war. It is a place where in 332 BC it fell under Greek culture and there was a temple to Pan, some remains still there today. A pagan place where Jesus asks that question “who do people say I am?”

We’re so accustomed to hearing the question, as we hear it every Feast of St Peter & St Paul, on some other Petrine feasts and each synoptic writer Matthew, Mark, Luke all include it.

Bishop Robert Barron refers to it in his Catholicism DVD’s: ‘Jesus didn’t ask them what people thought about his teaching or what impression he was making or how the crowds were interpreting his actions - reasonable enough questions. He wanted to know what they thought about his identity, his being. And this question - reiterated by Christian theologians through the centuries - sets Jesus off from all other great religious founders. The Buddha actively discouraged his followers from focusing on his person, urging them instead to walk the spiritual way which he himself had benefitted. Mohammed was an ordinary man who claimed to have received Allah’s definitive revelation. He would never have dreamt of drawing attention to his own person. Confucius was a moral philosopher, who with particular acuity, formulated a series of ethical recommendations that constituted a balanced way of being in the world. The structure of his being was never a matter of concern either to him or his followers. And then there is Jesus!’

We are familiar with Peter’s reply: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

I want to suggest that that reply should draw from us 3 things:

**W-H-O - WORSHIP – HOLINESS – OTHERS**

**Worship** is our due to God, revealed to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

If God is God, if Jesus is who Peter says: then worship can be our only proper response. The Great Commandment is to love God with all our heart and soul mind and strength, and our neighbour as ourselves. The worship of God is primary. But as one of our parishioners said to me only yesterday people’s worship, idolizing today is of sports or pop stars.

Pope St Pius X wrote “From the beginning of the Church the divinely inspired psalms in the Bible have had a remarkable influence in deepening the devotion of the faithful as they offer to God a continual sacrifice of praise.”

Our psalm today is a hymn of individual thanksgiving. The Psalmist is very conscious that he owes everything to God, whose mercy is always open to those of a humble heart.

*Your love, O Lord, is eternal, discard not the work of your hands.* The creature and the Creator.

**Holiness:** for the Lord our God is holy.

Cardinal Hume spoke of at least three qualities in holy people: 1<sup>st</sup> they’ve discovered the love of God and responded to it. The test that this love of God is authentic is in the manner whereby it overflows into the world around them, their neighbours, but quite especially those who are in need and perhaps the most neglected. That all flows into **Others:** 2<sup>nd</sup> is their unbounded confidence in God and in his providence, trusting him with a trust which may seem at times almost unreasonable. 3<sup>rd</sup> a positive zest for life. Holy people are never bored, never cynical, never unkind, never bigotedly critical.

**W-H-O are also the initials for World Health Organisation. *There is no other saviour for the whole of world health than Jesus.***