

Opening Prayer: We pray that our faith will not fail. Be with us Oh Lord! So, we know who you are!

Sermon:

Reputation vs Confirmation: 2 powerful terms that best describe how we view people, titles, or items. With these 2, we tend to use terms that, sometimes, we either forget the meaning of or don't understand how powerful they are. That's what we see with today's Gospel. Let's get into it. Jesus and his disciples are walking through a Roman established town, when he stops and asks the disciples, "who do people say the Son of Man is?" Well before we dive into everyone's answers, let me ask you: what does the title "Son of Man" mean? Does anyone truly know the meaning and history of that term? [ask the congregation and see the different answers]. Well, this term has a lot of history.

In Hebrew, it literally translates to "humankind" or "mortal man". Throughout the Old Testament, the term tends to evolve. God calls Ezekiel "Son of Man" many times, referring to people like Ezekiel as strong humans with great relationships with God. In Daniel, he prophesized a heavenly figure coming down to earth "like a Son of Man" or in human form. When Jesus refers to himself as the "Son of Man", he is referring to his human self vs his divine self. So, when Jesus asked his disciples who everyone says the Son of Man is and the disciples named everyone but Jesus, which they were technically right. But after, Jesus asks his Disciples, "who do you say I am?" This is a BIG TEST for the disciples because, as Fr. Joshua alluded in his sermon last week, Jesus had a polarizing reputation. Some groups knew him as the Nazarian, the healer, the teacher, someone sent by God. Other groups knew him as a blasphemer, a criminal, one that thinks he's bigger than God, a threat to the establishment of Jerusalem at the time. But there is one term that both groups were afraid to identify Jesus as: Messiah.

So now what does Messiah mean? It means "Anointed One" or "Chosen One". The messiah was seen as someone from King David's bloodline who will come build a new temple and free the chosen people of oppression (which at that time was seen as the Romans). Anointing someone as the Messiah could be punishable by death to that person and the person calling them "Messiah". Now when Jesus asked "who do you say I am", Simon confidently announced Jesus as the Messiah, basically saying "I've heard all the teachings, I've seen everything you've done. You are the holiest of holy, the one to free us from oppression and no one can convince me otherwise." But Simon wasn't saying Jesus was here to free everyone from the Romans, but rather he was saying Jesus was here to free people from other oppressions. Which Oppressions? Sin? Well yes but also oppression of a disconnect from God! In those days, people felt they were only connected to God in 1 way: the Temple of Jerusalem. The temple was split up into sections, each section would allow only specific people. In the center of the temple, there was a section where only the high priests were allowed in. Finally, there was a room separating the final room with a veil, the Holy of Holies, where the Ark of the Covenant/Staff of Aaron/Jar of Mana, once lived before disappearing in 536 BC (the year when Babylonians destroyed the first temple).

Only one man (The highest of priests) was allowed to be in this room, a room that is believed to be the holiest of sites where God's presence truly lived. Only 1 man truly be in God's presence, connected to Him, once a year. Every year, when we talk about the Passion story, we hear when Jesus died, the walls of the temple were destroyed and the veil of the temple split in half, symbolizing the disconnect between God and his people ending. Simon's comments today foretold this and confirmed he believed what Jesus' identity truly was: The Connection between God and his people! In return, Jesus says calls Simon Peter or "rock" and upon that rock, Jesus will build his church.

So how does this relate to us today? When I hear this passage, I think the last line is more symbolic than an actual building because [knock on the wall] you need more than 1 rock to build a church (Sorry St. Peters Basilica). So what's it a symbol of? Well, our faith, confirmation, and connection of knowing who Jesus is, not reputation. When the veil ripped in the temple, it made it easier for us to connect with God and confirm who he is. Through that confirmation, we can build a church full of faith and community. With that, we can relate to Peter in this story. But when in our lives do we have a chance to be like Peter? Well, we do it every Sunday when we say the creed and we're about to do it again in a few minutes. But we shouldn't only do it once a week at St. Michaels. Outside these wall, we should be living out our faith, confirming it, welcoming all, helping those in need and helping others to connect with God through Jesus. Our faith should not be just a term we use every day and forget the meaning of; it should be an actual way of life, like Simon Peter was the rest of the New Testament (even with the ups and downs). For me personally, I try to live out my faith through actions: how I treat people, making sure they have a support system, doing my best to live a good life because that is what the church is. So, lets together confirm our faith by reciting the creed, confirming our faith, and know who Jesus truly is-The Messiah and our connection to God. Because the world may have many answers to who they think Jesus is, but let's hear who you say he is to you?