



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

ANGELUS

*Saint Peter's Square
Sunday, 27 August 2017*

[Multimedia]

Dear brothers and sisters, Good morning!

This Sunday's Gospel (Mt 16:13-20) takes us back to a key juncture along Jesus' journey with his disciples: the moment in which he wants to assess the extent of their faith in him. First, he wants to know what the people think of him; and the people think that Jesus is a prophet, which is true, but they do not grasp the centrality of his Person; they do not understand the centrality of his mission. Then he asks the disciples the question closest to his heart, that is, he asks them directly: "But who do you say that I am?" (v. 15). And with that 'but' Jesus firmly separates the Apostles from the multitudes, as if to say: but you, who are with me every day and know me personally, what more have you understood? The Master expects from his own a lofty response different from that of public opinion. And indeed, such an answer gushes forth from the heart of Simon, called Peter: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (v. 16). Simon Peter finds on his lips words greater than he, words that do not spring from his natural faculties. Perhaps he did not attend elementary school, and [yet] he is capable of saying these words, stronger than he! But they are inspired by the Heavenly Father (cf. v. 17), who reveals Jesus' true identity to the first of the Twelve: he is the Messiah, the Son sent by God to save mankind. And from this answer, Jesus understands that, thanks to the faith given by the Father, there is a solid foundation upon which he can build his community, his Church. Thus, he says to Simon: You, Simon, "you are Peter" — that is, stone, rock — "and on this rock I will build my Church" (v. 18).

With us too, today, Jesus wants to continue building his Church, this house with solid foundations but where cracks are not lacking, and which is in constant need of repair. Always. The Church always needs to be reformed, repaired. We certainly do not feel like rocks, but only like small stones. However, no small stone is useless; indeed, in Jesus' hands the smallest stone becomes

precious, because he picks it up, gazes at it with great tenderness, fashions it with his Spirit, and positions it in the right place that he had always had in mind and where it can be more useful to the whole structure. Each of us is a small stone, but in Jesus' hands participates in the building of the Church. And all of us, as small as we are, are rendered "living stones" because when Jesus takes his stone in hand, he makes it his own; he infuses it with life, full of life, full of life from the Holy Spirit, full of life from his love. And thus we have a place and a mission in the Church: she is a community of life, made up of very many stones, all different, which form a single edifice as a sign of fraternity and communion.

Moreover, today's Gospel reminds us that Jesus also wanted Peter as a visible centre of communion for his Church — he too, is not a great stone; he is a small stone, but taken up by Jesus, he becomes the centre of communion — in Peter and in those who would succeed him in the same responsibility of primacy, who since the beginning have been identified as the Bishops of Rome, the city where Peter and Paul bore witness in blood.

Let us entrust ourselves to Mary, Queen of the Apostles, Mother of the Church. She was in the Upper Room next to Peter when the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles and spurred them to go out to proclaim to all that Jesus is Lord. Today may our Mother sustain us and accompany us through her intercession, so that we may fully realize that unity and that communion for which Christ and the Apostles prayed and gave their lives.

After the Angelus:

Dear brothers and sisters, in recent days, major floods have hit Bangladesh, Nepal and India. I express my closeness to the populations and pray for the victims and for those who are suffering because of this disaster.

Sad news has reached us of the persecution of the religious minority, our Rohingya brothers and sisters. I would like to express all of my closeness to them; and let us all ask the Lord to save them, and to inspire men and women of good will to come to their aid, so that they may be given their full rights. Let us also pray for our Rohingya brothers and sisters.

I greet all of you, faithful of Rome and pilgrims from Italy and from various countries: families, parish groups, associations.

In particular, I greet the members of the Third Carmelite Order; the young people of Tombelle, diocese of Padua — my, you are boisterous! — who have recently received Confirmation; and the group from Lodivecchio: they are valiant because they walked the last part of the *Via Francigena* on pilgrimage. May you be so valiant in your life!

I wish everyone a happy Sunday. I implore you, do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your lunch.

Arrivederci!

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