



The Holy See

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Buongiorno!

At the heart of today's Gospel (Mt 16:13-19) in today's liturgy the Lord asks the disciples a decisive question: "Who do you say that I am?" (v. 15). It is the crucial question that Jesus also repeats to us today: "Who am I to you?". *Who am I to you*, who have accepted faith but are still afraid to set sail on my Word? *Who am I to you*, who have been a Christian for a long time but, worn out by habit, have lost your first love? *Who am I to you*, who are going through a difficult time and need to rouse yourself in order to begin again? Jesus asks: *Who am I to you?* Let us give him an answer today, but an answer that comes from the heart. All of us, let us give him an answer that comes from the heart.

Prior to this question, Jesus asked the disciples another one: "Who do people say that I am?" (cf. v. 13). It was a survey to find out opinions about him and the fame he enjoyed, but notoriety does not interest Jesus; it was not that kind of survey. So, why did he ask the question? To underline a difference, which is *the fundamental difference of Christian life*. There are those who stop at the first question, opinions, and talk *about Jesus*; and there are those who, instead, talk *to Jesus*, bringing their life to Him, entering into a relationship with him, making the decisive step. This is what interests the Lord: to be at the centre of our thoughts, to become the reference point of our affections; to be, in short, the love of our lives. Not the opinions we have of him; they do not interest him. He is interested in our love, whether he is in our heart.

The Saints we celebrate today took that step and became *witnesses*. The step from opinion to having Jesus in their heart: witnesses. They were not *admirers*, but *imitators* of Jesus. They were not spectators, but rather protagonists of the Gospel. They believed not in words, but in deeds. Peter did not speak about mission, he lived the mission, he was a fisher of men; Paul did not write learned books, but letters of what he lived as he travelled and bore witness. Both spent their lives for the Lord and for their brothers and sisters. And they provoke us, because we run the risk of stalling at the first question: of giving views and opinions, of having grand ideas and saying

beautiful words, but never putting ourselves on the line. And Jesus wants us to put ourselves on the line. How often, for example, we say that we would like a Church that is more faithful to the Gospel, closer to the people, more prophetic and missionary, but then, in practice, we do nothing! It is sad to see that many speak, comment and debate, but few bear witness. Witnesses do not lose themselves in words, but rather they bear fruit. Witnesses do not complain about others and the world, but they start with themselves. They remind us that *God is not to be demonstrated, but shown*, by one's own witness; not announced with proclamations but witnessed by example. This is called "putting your life on the line".

However, looking at the lives of Peter and Paul, an objection might arise: they were both witnesses, but they were not always exemplary — they were sinners! Peter denied Jesus and Paul persecuted the Christians. But — here is the point — they also bore witness to their failures. Saint Peter, for example, could have said to the Evangelists: "Do not write down the mistakes I have made", make a Gospel for fun. But no, his story comes out naked, it comes out raw in the Gospels, with all its miseries. Saint Paul does the same, recounting mistakes and weaknesses in his letters. This is where his witness begins: with the truth about himself, with the fight against his own duplicity and falsehood. The Lord can do great things through us when we are not careful to defend our image, but are transparent with him and with others. Today, dear brothers and sisters, the Lord is questioning us. And his question is the same one — *Who am I to you?* It delves into us. Through his witnesses Peter and Paul, he urges us to take off our masks, to renounce half-measures, the excuses that make us lukewarm and mediocre. May Our Lady, Queen of the Apostles, help us in this. May she kindle in us the desire to bear witness to Jesus.

After the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters, the day after tomorrow, [1 July, a special day of prayer and reflection for Lebanon will take place here in the Vatican](#). Together with the Heads of all the Churches present in the Land of the Cedars, we will let ourselves be inspired by the Word of the Scripture that says: "The Lord has plans for peace" (cf. Jer 29: 11). I invite you all to join spiritually with us, praying that Lebanon may recover from the serious crisis it is going through and show the world once again its face of peace and hope.

1 July will mark the 160th anniversary of the first edition of "*L'Osservatore Romano*", the "party newspaper", as I call it. Best wishes and many thanks for your service. Continue your work with fidelity and creativity.

And today marks an anniversary that touches the hearts of us all: 70 years ago, [Pope Benedict](#) was ordained a priest. [Applause] To you, Benedict, dear father and brother, goes our affection, our gratitude and our closeness. He lives in the monastery, a place intended to house the

contemplative communities here in the Vatican, so that they could pray for the Church. He is currently the contemplative of the Vatican, who spends his life praying for the Church and for the Diocese of Rome, of which he is Bishop emeritus. Thank you, Benedict, dear father and brother. Thank you for your credible witness. Thank you for your gaze, constantly directed towards the horizon of God: thank you!

I warmly greet you all, pilgrims from Italy and from various countries; but today I address myself in a special way to the people of Rome, on the feast of our Patron Saints. I bless you, dear Romans! I wish every good to the city of Rome: that, thanks to the commitment of all of you, of all the citizens, it may be liveable and welcoming, that no one be excluded, that children and the elderly may be cared for, that there may be work and that it may be dignified, and that the poor and the last may be at the centre of political and social projects. I pray for this. And may you too, dear faithful of Rome, pray for your Bishop. Thank you.

I wish a good feast to you all! Enjoy your lunch, *Arrivederci!*