

realpeople

the gospel in everyday language



In today's readings:

God's reign of saving justice. Isaiah 51:1-6
Rich are the depths of God. Romans 11:33-36
You are Peter, the rock. Matthew 16:13-20

Next week:

Jesus: destined to suffer.
Jeremiah 15:15-21; Romans
12:1-13; Matthew 16:21-27

In a nutshell

'You are the Christ.' In today's Gospel the apostle bears witness to Jesus and is entrusted with new authority: 'You are Peter and on this rock I will build my Church'. This authority involves a responsibility to lead and serve in Christ's name so that others may also confess Jesus as Lord.



Who do you say I am? In the context of religious pluralism, Jesus' question would trigger an extraordinary range of answers. As Christians, how do we answer the question?

Shared Wisdom

We met at a quiet mountain lookout overlooking the valley of a national park. The first thing I noticed was the chain of Indian beads around his neck. And his posture. He was sitting in an almost yoga-like position cloaked in an aura of contemplative authority. A calm, 'guru' type of character, he was dressed in jeans, snakeskin boots, a light Indian shirt and scarf. We began to talk. 'It's a beautiful view, isn't it?'

'Yes, it's a sacred place,' he replied. We sat in silence, soaking up sounds of a distant waterfall. 'But there's another side to it,' he said slowly. 'A painful side.' 'You're obviously a spiritual person,' I ventured, intrigued by the way this conversation was going. He explained that he used to identify with the spirituality of a North

American Indian tribe, but now he had his 'own' spirituality. 'And you?' he asked. 'Are you a spiritual person?' I explained I was a Christian and why this was important to me. We exchanged a few thoughts and continued to enjoy the view. As I went to leave, I thanked him for sharing his peace with me and asked him for a word of wisdom. 'Here is God,' he said, sweeping his arm across the view. 'Look into the horizon and one will find God.'

I left the scene, thoughtful and at peace. It was good to meet this man and to share a spiritual bond. I could ponder his wisdom, and find its connection with my own faith tradition.

But I was also aware of our points of departure. The God I worship is not just 'out there', but close to me...within me. The God I worship is more than a presence in nature, but a person who relates to me in a deeply personal way. My spirituality is inseparable from community, not just 'mine' but 'ours'. While admiring much about this man, I felt deeply grounded in my Christian tradition that acknowledges Jesus, the risen Lord. (Paul)

A wonderful witness

This snippet comes via a parish worker at a busy inner-city parish.

The man outside the church porch, a local shop owner of no religious persuasion, was shaking his head in disbelief. 'I can't understand it,' he said to me. 'I work at that store across the road there and I watch people going in and out of this church all day -

every day - not just Sundays! People of all ages, all nationalities... What is it about this place? I thought people didn't go to church any more.'



church below the rooftops

- *Who do you say I am?*
- *How do you respond?*

We pray:

- For conversion of heart;
- For courage to live the gospel;
- For Church leaders;
- That we will take responsibility for the mission of the Church.

Questions. Answers. Questions...

As I grow as a person and mature as a Christian, I find that my understanding of God continues to grow and change. I keep discovering new dimensions to this mystery of God's grace. God is unknowable, yet God is so 'human.' God is within, yet God is 'beyond.' God is mysterious, God is so 'practical'. Jesus is an old friend, yet Jesus is someone I'm still just getting to know. God is Spirit... Word... Father... Mother... God is love... and you can never exhaust the possibilities of love. (Anna)



RealPeople offers faith reflections from the saints and prophets of everyday life.

A publication of
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